

The
IMPRISONED
FREEMAN

Helen S. Woodruff

477F

Buy your books for
10cts up at
"Bookland"

(Nat L. Oliver)
1020 West 7th Street
L.A. Calif
(Vanderbilt 9858)

Nearly opposite

Bob White's

Second hand music store
7th West 7th just beyond
Studebaker store
West of So Figueroa

7962

4

BOOKLOVERS
LOAN LIBRARY
LOS ANGELES.

BOOKS
LOAN LIBRARY
REFERENCE

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

Woodruff = Woodsman

THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

BY
HELEN S. WOODRUFF

Author of "The Lady of the Lighthouse," "Mis' Beauty," "Really Truly" Series, "Mr. Doctor Man," etc.

NEW YORK
GEORGE SULLY & COMPANY

Copyright, 1918, by
HELEN S. WOODRUFF

All rights reserved

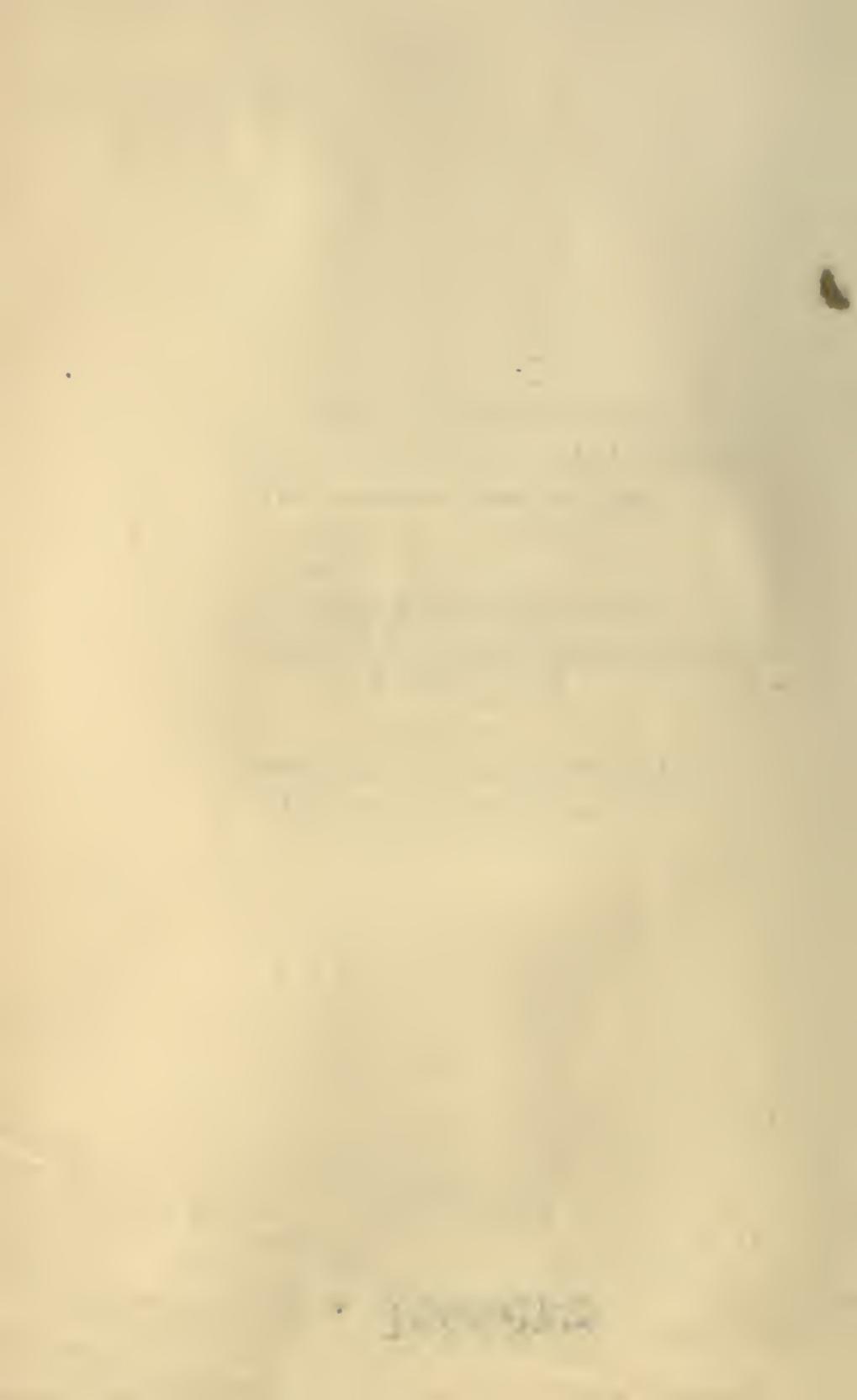
First Edition, April, 1918

Printed in U. S. A.

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO
HON. MORRIS WOODRUFF SEYMOUR
Who blazed the trail for me to write it;

TO
HON. RICHARD M. HURD
My guide, philosopher and friend through the period
of its writing; and
TO
HON. THOMAS MOTT OSBORNE
The "man with a vision," who inspired it.

2138891



AUTHOR'S NOTE

In this story the author has not written of Dickens's and Reade's times, nor of their country. Neither are the atrocities of which she tells those committed by Germany, but are one and all committed here and now in our own country, the United States of America

CHAPTER I

DICK DENNISON jumped from his boat as its keel grated on the shore, carelessly throwing in its bottom the paper-backed novel he had been reading; and then, pulling the boat up onto the small strip of snowy beach, tied it securely to a place just below the huge rocks that jutted out into the blueness of the little bay. At his approach a flock of sandpipers whirred into the air, and circling seemed to be suddenly obliterated—then all at once their breasts gleamed white against the horizon, once more conspicuous as they wheeled and circled away. Pausing, the boy gazed after them a moment as though spellbound. Across the island-studded, rippling blue expanse lay the white-capped ocean. It was June, and the thick mass of the woods coming down to the very edge of the rock-bound coast was reawakened from its winter dullness of spruce and pine-needled greenness by intermingling of the lacy, tender youth of belated white flowering cherry, creamy fuzzy oaks, and dainty leaved maples in scarlet bloom.

Richard caught his breath with pleasure. The scene, old as it was to his native eyes, was never old, and each time that he saw it his heart thrilled with its majesty and beauty. Jerking at the anchor rope to assure himself that he had tied the boat so that the incoming tide could not possibly loosen it, he climbed nimbly up the huge lichen-covered boulder nearest him, and throwing his head back began to sing, as from this height he saw the lovely landscape grown in breadth.

Straight and tall and lithe as a young Indian, and nearly as brown, he looked a very wood god in his

2 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

clean-limbed vigor as he paused under a gnarled oak and drank in the soft June air. He gloried in every leaf, every tree, every stick and stone of this old rugged coast, for ever since he could remember he had loved to slip away from the white house on the elm-lined village street and come here—or out on the sun-kissed bay—for his pleasure and recreation.

At the sound of his joyous bursting song a red squirrel, fluffy tail turned over back, darted up the tree trunk to a height of safety, and then sitting there, with one paw over its heart, looked down at the boy and chattered saucily. A big old clumsy porcupine stopped its lumbering walk through last year's leaves that, like elderly people, were still murmuring of their by-gone summer, and gazed at him in dignity; then at his uninterrupted approach, rolled itself into a ball and bristled its armament of quills. A bluejay, perched just above his head, flicked its wings and flew to a nearby beech tree, giving harsh warning to its nesting mate. The rays of the sinking sun fell softly on the fresh green of the young leaves that clapped their hands with glee. The boy laughed aloud for the pure joy of living. His eyes sparkled. How he loved it all—the beeches with their big, clean, gray-white trunks, the many kinds of birches, the oaks. Looking through these he saw the color of the bay intensified, and standing out blackly against the sunset sky a big osprey's nest in a stark tree at the water's edge. He would never leave these woods. How could people shut themselves in dirty, noisy cities, when all out-of-doors was theirs for the taking!

Just then spying a bunch of spring anemones peeping out at him in pink-cheeked shyness, he stopped and began to pick them, changing his full-voiced song to a faint chant of murmured carefree happiness.

"You beauties!" he finally said aloud, ceasing his

song and gathering all the blossoms in sight, "how Mumsy'll love you!" and he filled both his long-fingered, capable young hands in his eagerness to please his little mother.

"She must come out with me to-morrow! The whole world is June—is June!" And he began humming again as he gazed about him at the riot of fresh color, of yellow dogtooth violets which, with the dainty white and pink bloom of spring-beauties, partridge-berry flowers and trailing vines of the mitchella, formed a perfumed carpet for the entire woods. "That old pain in her side will surely be better now."

Having gathered all the flowers he wished he straightened up and, throwing his head back, burst into a loud, blithesome whistle as he left the woods for home. His way led across fields of waving daisies, buttercups and primroses over which a swarm of pink-winged noctuid moths rose and hovered in ecstasy, then settled to their feast again as he reached the village street.

Striding down its elm-bordered way he soon came to a high white fence which he jumped with one bound, ran through a grove, and bolted up the steps of the austere house behind it, finally bursting into its hall. Throwing his well-aimed cap over a peg on the wall he made a dash for the library door, still whistling as he went.

"Hello, Mumsy," he cried; "I've had the best sail ever—and look at these——"

But he stopped short, for from across the square, bare library table, lighted only by a green-shaded reading lamp, he saw his father's thin, gray-bearded face frowning at him, and beyond that, out in the green-tinted dimness, his mother's frail figure kneeling in the attitude of prayer.

Her features were white and drawn, and looking

4 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

toward him she surreptitiously held up her hand in warning. Understanding, he silently stepped into the circle of light which emphasized the gloom of the grim, book-lined room, and putting the anemones on the table looked his father silently in the eyes. The elderly man opened his lips to speak, and the small, gray-clad woman trembled, then started to rise to her feet; but a sudden wave of emotion sweeping over her, instead she remained quite still, her eyes looking from first one to the other of the two as she caught at the sharp pain in her side. The older man leaned slightly forward and, scowling, addressed his son.

"Give an accounting of yourself," he said. "Where have you been?" And then, before the boy could possibly answer, he continued:

"Do you hear me, sir? Answer!"

At his tone and words a spark of anger came into the boy's black eyes for a moment, but controlling his voice he said:

"Yes, Father, I hear you. I have——"

But Dick's very self-control seemed to irritate his father further, and sitting very straight in his chair he cut in sharply:

"No back talk. Where have you been?"

Dick flushed, started to speak sharply, then becoming aware of his mother's pleading white face again raised to his, answered quietly:

"Sailing, Father. I thought you knew."

"Thought I knew——!" the man caught him up. "You lie. You know if I *had* known you would not have done it! And what does this mean?"—displaying a paper-bound book with lurid title. "Didn't I forbid you reading novels," and he angrily tore the book in half and flung it on the floor at the boy's feet. "You either read God's Holy Word or you

read nothing. Understand? Never let me find such trash in this house again!"

Then rising he turned, and putting the big Bible he held upon the seat of his chair, knelt in front of it, saying in command to the boy:

"Kneel down, sir, and ask our Heavenly Father to forgive you."

For a moment the boy hesitated.

"Kneel down!" his father fairly thundered.

"But, Father, I don't—"

"Kneel down!" his father commanded, and again catching his mother's eye the boy did so without further argument, as his father continued biting:

"I never thought I'd live to see the day a son of mine broke the Holy Sabbath! And furthermore," bitterly, "I hope you realize you've kept your mother on her knees until they are doubtless bruised and sore."

The boy had sprung up, his face crimson, his eyes darting fire.

"Father!" he cried. "You know that is not so! Mother!" and he made a quick move in her direction, but was stopped by his father's arm.

"You know I love her better than—than my very soul!" he said. "Mother!"

But the elder man scowled more deeply and opened his lips to speak, when the woman interrupted gently:

"Kneel down, Richard."

Obeying the half-frightened pleading of her big eyes he knelt and buried his face in his hands, while his father's sonorous voice presently broke the stillness of the room.

"Oh, Heavenly Father," he prayed, "we are unclean. We are full of iniquity—there is no good in us. We are as of the dust beneath Thy feet, not fit for Thee to

6 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

tread upon. Chasten us that we may know Thou lovest us. Make us welcome Thy well-merited punishment for our sins. Show us Thy mighty wrath that we may fear to sin against Thee, and though we deserve naught but chastisement at Thy hands, forgive our undeservingness at last and take our worthless souls home to Thee. Oh, Father of all, Jehovah, my son has sinned against Thee. - He hath committed a crime against Thy Holy Day. Lay thy mark upon him. Punish him that he may know——”

But with a sigh the frail little woman near him relaxed her hold upon the chair at which she knelt. The old, old pain had grown worse—alarmingly worse! It had seemed to sap her very life's blood as it shot its quivering way through her breast, and at last, reaching her pale lips, suffused them with a foamy crimson the feeling of which frightened her. Falling backward, she lay in a huddled heap while the crimson spread down the soft white bosom to the gray dress, there darkening it strangely.

At the sound of her soft falling the boy had looked up, and now he uttered a cry like that of a wounded animal, and springing forward he gathered her in his arms.

“Mother!” he cried. “Mother, darling! What's the matter? Speak to me!—darling!”

His father, frightened too, slowly arose from his knees and came over to where the boy knelt holding the unconscious head in both his arms.

The little woman's eyes flickered open for a moment and set themselves on her husband's hard-featured face. Then shuddering she called into command every bit of will power in her body, and turning her eyes slowly toward her boy moved her lips. He bent nearer, and she whispered brokenly:

“God is—Love—not Vengeance. Remember—that

THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN 7

—Richard—son. Life *can* be—happy—Sunshine—
Flowers—*Love*—Remember!"

A glory filled her face, and she smiled at him for a moment more; then closed her eyes—forever.

At their closing the boy gave a frightened scream.

"The doctor, Father! the doctor!" he cried. But even as he spoke he knew that there was no use; and the man knew too, instinctively. His hard, gray-bearded face broke into a quiver of feeling as he looked down into that of his wife. Then raising himself, he said in his usual inflexible voice:

"God's will be done," and turning he would have walked from them both had not the boy's voice stopped him.

"No, no, no!" Richard screamed, his cheeks blanched with suffering, his eyes afire. "Stay here, Father; I must go for the doctor!"

Bending his face nearer the one on his arm, he went on hysterically, "Oh, God, if you are a just God, you will not take her from me!" Then a wave of anger surging strong through him, he clinched his teeth and muttered: "I shall know You are hard and unjust, too, if she dies!"

With a shock of horror the older man stooped, and without so much as a word took the limp little body from his son's arms into his own. Then he said severely:

"Let me hear no more, blasphemer! Our Father knows best," and he strode from the room.

Pausing at the doorway he looked back. "Go for Dr. Dreary." Then he added: "This is God's way of punishing you. I asked and now this is His answer."

But the boy had not even heard his last words. For a moment he stood dazed, and then groping from the room grabbed his cap from the peg and went to

8 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

the door. There, overcome with his grief, but stifling a choking sob, he turned and ran back. Flinging himself silently at his father's feet, he took his mother's pale hand that hung down limply, and covered it with kisses. Then he rushed from the house.

* * * * *

Hours after, the moon rose to prophesy the coming day, and the kindly village doctor left the saddened house. A still white form lay alone, locked in an unlighted upstairs room, while in the dimly lit library Deacon Dennison knelt in resigned prayer.

Out in the woods the boy tramped, tramped, back and forth, a battle raging in his heart. The moon turned everything into fairyland. The incoming tide dashed and roared against the rocks. Each wave, silver-tipped, sent up a great spray of diamond-dusted laciness that glistened against the somber hugeness of the boulders. Unheeding, Richard tramped on, his head bowed upon his breast. Thus he had walked for many hours. Then suddenly seeming to rouse himself, he sat down and gazed out across the little cove at his feet. Here the water, protected by the half circle of rocky shore, rolled less brokenly, the great waves almost reaching the strip of sandy beach before they broke; and it seemed to his imaginative eyes that they were alive, so eagerly did each wave succeed each and come rolling on its undulating way! He imagined he saw in every one of them the face of some sea maiden featured like his mother, who, lured by a human lover on the shore, came eagerly to his arms—only to die.

And then the whole scene was blotted out as he remembered with a heart-stifling pang why he was sitting there at that time of night. Restlessly rising he again tramped the woods.

Over the carpet of violets and twin flower vines

that trailed their delicate way, their tiny pink and white blossoms gleaming in the moonlight, he ruthlessly went, forgetting everything except his own present suffering and its cause. Back through the years of his childhood he deliberately let his thoughts carry him, always recalling his mother and all she had meant in his life.

Slight and girlish of figure, with a delicately featured face and great dark eyes, the expression of which was ever changing, she seemed to her son as he viewed her thus across the years hardly older than himself. He realized now more than he had ever realized before what his father's cold nature had meant to a nature like hers. He had heard from her lips the story of how *her* father had died when she was eighteen, and left her to the guardianship of his friend, Deacon Dennison. How that friend, a deeply religious man over twice her age, had come to see her, and finding her alone and unprotected had married her on the spot. But though their son had not heard the rest of the story, it unrolled itself before him now as plainly as if he had known it and its end from the very first. He realized that the death of the frail little body, lying so still at that very moment on the bed where he was born, was only the culmination of a death which had commenced on the day of his birth; for, violently jealous of his own son, his father from that moment had crushed all the youth of life from his wife as surely as if he had used physical force! Thus it is always with the jealousy of age against the vitality of youth.

Richard again recalled her as with carefree laughter she had romped with him, then a tiny boy, in these very woods. Or again he watched her dancing feet as, bursting into snatches of song, she would grab him by both his fat little arms and whirl him about

10 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

in a mad laughing gale, until both of them were exhausted by the frolic, and she would drop down in a flushed heap and pretend sleep until he awakened her with his eager moist kisses.

But even then, on those happy occasions, his father's dark stern figure began to obtrude itself, until, as he recalled now, such frolics were associated with an uneasy fear of unhappiness and harsh words to follow, which would result in tears for his little mother! Over and over, a daily occurrence in the white house on the village street, their two laughing voices would be hushed into startled silence at the click of the gate; or else, if their laughter was so loud as to drown that sound, the mother's merriment was soon turned to sadness by her husband's unexpected entrance and scolding accusation of "unseemly frivolity." Deacon Dennison had not welcomed his son at birth, and more and more the growing boy became a source of jealousy and irritation to him.

Years passed, years that brought broken-spirited peace for her—for the frolics had ceased to be. Richard, only half conscious of what he saw, watched his young mother grow into a sad, quiet little drab woman of middle age, old before her time. Only her faithful eyes dared speak to him of her yearning mother-love, and Deacon Dennison at last found himself master indeed.

His father's severity and somber outlook on life had failed utterly, however, to break Richard's spirits. Instead of becoming docile and subservient as had his mother's weaker nature, his had become dangerously defiant in its steadily growing strength and personality. Instead of the worshipful attitude his father demanded of him, he could not help but see the injustice of his demands, and bitterness against his father grew in his heart.

Pausing a moment in these vivid memories, he again sat down at the edge of the woods and watched the shoreward waves. A thought entirely new came to his maturing mind. Was it, after all, wholly his father's fault, that terrible jealousy which had demanded his mother's ageing before her time? Perhaps it was but natural, and he could not help it. Somewhere he, Richard, had read "Out of life—death. Out of death—life." Was that the explanation of older people always trying to suppress the young, he wondered? Was it the natural law of self-preservation inherited from savage forebears? But to what selfishness it led! The young oftentimes become old, and lose their opportunity for usefulness, because their elders are ever striving to suppress, or thwart them, while they themselves insist upon occupying the younger generations' rightful places—but the thought grew too big for him and he let it drop. Certainly, he decided, each generation as they aged thought they were the *only* right thinkers—yet civilization continued to climb upward!

With this enlightening idea there welled up a feeling of half pity for his father, whom probably he had never understood. Richard's sympathetic nature, quick always to find excuse for others, tried to look at his father from this new viewpoint. He would try to understand him!

For some time the moon had been an unwilling prisoner behind a wide bar of leaden-colored cloud, which gave the proverbial "darkest before dawn" effect to the landscape; but now as it was released and, sailing out into the clearness above, smiled down to brighten the fairy woods, the boy's heart pulsated with a new resolve.

His father was doubtless suffering too. He would go to him—would talk to him freely of *her*—would

12 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

tell him that he, Richard, would try to do more as his father wished.

He arose and turned back into the woods. Yes, he would try to understand his father better. He knew he stood high in the God-fearing community in which they lived. He was looked up to, and spoken of as an example for young men to follow; and yet—yet—

Richard strode on. A night owl popped from his hole just above his head and hooted hoarsely. A loon in the lake beyond the marshes laughed his shrill note of derision—the moon hid behind a cloud again; but with eager, stumbling feet the boy rushed on through the night. His whole being was suffused and aquiver with a great hungry longing for sympathy and understanding from his father—all he had left in the world.

He reached the white gate of his home and went briskly up the walk to the glass-paneled door.

It was locked—and dark.

Rather surprised, he went around the house, glancing up at all the windows. They were entirely dark also.

With a quick, renewed doubt stabbing his heart, and redoubled anguish at the thought that his father *could* go to bed, as he so evidently had done, on a night of such sorrow, Richard went softly to the window of his mother's room.

There was no sound, and slipping his long fingers through the blinds he unfastened them and quietly clambered in.

The moon, again visible, lighted up the room brightly, and on the big four-poster bed, stark of softening draperies, he saw her lying, calm and sweet, her hands folded upon her breast. The smile that had illumined her face when she spoke her last words to him was still upon it.

So naturally was she lying, so exactly as he had often seen her when he had defied his father and stayed late during his rambles in the woods, and then clambered in through her window, that now his heart gave a great throb of hope.

This hope was quickly stifled, however, by a terrible pain of knowledge, and crossing softly to her side he knelt while great sobs shook him. For the first time since his childhood he knew the comforting effect of tears. His clenched hands slowly unlocked themselves. Leaning forward he laid his head reverently down upon her breast. A great peace filled him and the tears coursed unheeded down his cheeks.

Her words returned to him, and with them a picture of the sun-dappled flower-carpet of the woods came before his mind's eye.

"God is Love, not Vengeance—Life *can* be happy! Sunshine—flowers—love!"

Yes, he would try to be happy for her sake. He would try to understand and obey his father—

A sound grated at the door of the room and made him jump up quickly.

The key squeakily turned and then the door opened slowly.

He stepped forward.

"Father!" he began, as he saw who it was. "Father!" But the first affectionate utterance he had ever in his life dared give to his father froze as he caught sight of his angry face.

Lips drawn into a thin, hard line, his brow gathered darkly together in a frown, the other spoke.

"Come out!" he commanded angrily. "How dared you disobey me," and he drew the dazed boy roughly from the room into the dimly lighted hall, and noisily shut the door, putting his back against it. "Answer me, sir! I told you *no one* should enter that room!"

14 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

It is ungodly to gaze on that which God hath given over to dust for worms to devour—unseemly to sorrow over a worthless body! How did you get in there!" and his anger increasing he thundered: "Answer me, I say!"

With horror at the awful words which changed the comforting impression of this dear sleeping mother into a thing of awesomeness, the sensitive boy recoiled from him as from a blow, and stood staring, wild-eyed, a groan escaping from his lips.

Then with a rush the revulsion of feeling that he had always borne his father again swept over him, leaving him weak and exhausted.

"I—I can't answer," he said faintly in a queer tone entirely foreign to him, all his defiance gone, and looking strangely like his mother in his enfeebling suffering. "Oh—h—h—" and breaking away from his father with a convulsive sob he stumbled forward down the hall toward the door, through the glass panels of which could be seen the first faint eastern glow of the awakening morning. He would have gone out, but the elder man catching up with him seized him by the arm.

"Understand once and for all," he said, still too angry and arrogant to notice the boy's wild look. "From this day forth you don't prowl through the woods at night! I have known of your escapades more often than you think," and he looked back toward the closed door significantly. "Go upstairs and go to bed. You will obey me unreservedly from now on—or leave this house forever," and his face bore the indomitable look of cruel mastery that had broken the spirit and heart of his wife.

For a moment Richard did not seem to comprehend his words, and then, their meaning slowly conveying itself to his mind, numbed as it was with the

recent great struggle and conquest—only thus suddenly to be flung back upon itself—his head went up and black eyes flashed into black eyes. With rage that was at once calming and yet which seemed to turn him into another being, so strong with fury was it, he struggled from his father's hands and opening the door said thickly:

"Then I go out—with *her*—forever," and banged the door shut.

To Deacon Dennison it did not seem blasphemy to approach God, who is Love, with vengeance in his heart—it was even part of his religion, along with the belief in original sin and man's worthlessness—and so he prayed: "Oh, God, let Thy wrath and retribution descend upon my son until he knows the error of his ways. Amen."

CHAPTER II

HIGH and clear the plaintive song of a white-throated sparrow sounded through the June woods,



Opening his eyes at the sweet notes, Richard looked up through the trees under which he lay and off toward the beloved blue bay above which the sun was just rising.

With a deep breath he drew in the delicious perfume of the blossoming woods. Great masses of shade-blown, bridal in their purity, stood guard over near the edge of the swamp, while all about him brave, up-standing little jack-in-the-pulpits were holding their morning mass. The early risers among the primroses waved and smiled a good morning to him, while Lady Columbines, in harlequin-like splendor, shook their red and yellow cluster-bells and climbed up the gray rocks seeming to call to him: "Awake, lazy one, and enjoy our wondrous beauty!"

Everywhere there were flowers; and rubbing his eyes sleepily, he sat up and half-consciously repeated: "Sunshine—flowers—love." Then a pang of anguish shot through him as with returned consciousness he remembered why he was there and recalled all that had happened the past three days.

With a feeling of physical sickness such as he had experienced on awakening each morning since his mother's death, he dropped back on the moss, gazing

unseeing up into the trees as he again went over the scenes and sufferings of his last hours at home.

It was all over then! *She* was gone— He had no home, for home he could not have, he now realized, if it had to be shared with his father. But—he had her! As the sense of the presence of her love swept over him, he felt certain that that could never die, that it was his very own forever—no one could rob him of that!

His slender fingers fumbled in his inside pocket and drew out an old-fashioned locket in a worn chamois case. He looked at it sorrowfully, tears starting from his eyes. Presently opening it he let his fingers caress the few silken strands of golden hair curled around inside of it, then put it to his lips. Again he fished in a pocket and, producing a string, strung the locket upon it, slipped it over his head and down inside of his shirt. He would always wear it. His mother had given it to him years before. It was the first gift her husband had given her, and stood in her mind for the happiness that might have been and was not— save for the existence of her son. She had told him to keep it always—that it would tell him many things of her in after years and prove a talisman against unhappiness; so now he would wear it next his heart.

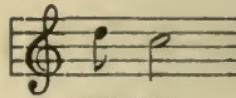
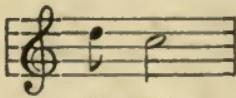
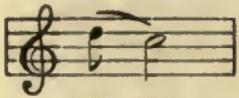
The sudden whining call of a low-flying bluejay as it flashed by, almost at his ear, made Richard jump; and feeling to see that the locket was safe, he again sat up and looked about him. Well, here would be his home after this—these woods he loved. The summer stretched before him in a long unbroken line of promise. He would live out here, a free man for once in his life. He would live deeply, with only nature's other free creatures for his companions. Hereafter he would serve no time at his father's bank "learning the business," as he had during the past few weeks.

18 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

"But the winter?" his judgment argued. "The rest of his life?"

"Let the future take care of that!" his youth replied. To live in the open, among the wild things he loved, was the only balm for his present suffering, and seemingly the only way he could hope for happiness, the happiness that he felt was his birthright, but which his father had tried so hard to destroy.

Suddenly from a tree just across an intervening open space, where dainty clusters of wild lilies-of-the-valley nodded their heads at him, the brisk call of a chickadee sounded, in a moment followed by its more intimate song. Looking sharply into the leaves he saw her modest little body aquiver with joy as, hopping contentedly from limb to limb, she continually interrupted her quest for food to repeat the plaintive notes :



He smiled. She was such a charming, housewifely, comfortable little being—and always so cheery. Never was there a time when he could remember the woods without her, summer or winter. Pursing his lips he made the sounds of her song. She cocked her little head eagerly from side to side and listened for a moment; then answered him.

He whistled her song again.

"Why, it must be some neighbor calling!" her listening attitude seemed to say. So, pee-weeing hospitably, she fluttered from branch to branch of her own tree down, down, nearer and nearer the sound, always cheerily answering and looking for the other bird.

Richard continued to imitate her song. Fluttering with curious interest she came quite near him, flying above his head, then gently swooping down near his side, or circling around him, her eyes turning in quick search for the singer, her every move seeming to say, as she kept on with her cordial greeting: "Where in the world *are* you? I'd love to talk over Peter Pan's gossip of the woods with you—but where *are* you?"

Richard laughed outright as over and over again he drew her close to him, only to have her fly away puzzled—yet always ready and willing to come cheerily back and commence her search again at his slightest whistled summons. So the boy for a time almost forgot his deep sorrow in his ever-keen interest in the wild life about him.

In an elm tree standing alone just beyond the edge of the woods, but plainly in view from his position, a pair of Baltimore orioles were building a nest, soon to be almost hidden by the fast-growing leaves. Back and forth they flew, their brilliant orange-and-black bodies flashing merrily in and out among the soft green, while they brought billful after billful of grape-vine shreds and busily worked at the pale gray basket poised so gracefully, hanging from the drooping tip of a skyward bough. Richard noticed there were two other nests close to the new one, and surmising that they had doubtless been built by the same pair during two previous summers, he thought aloud:

"Even *you* can't bear to leave these dear old free woods for very long—can you now?" And with these words he got to his feet, realizing for the first time he had had no breakfast that morning and beginning to feel the real pangs of hunger. In a moment he had reached the shore of the cove below him, and stripping off his clothes plunged into the icy water. As he splashed and dove, his long arms flashed white

20 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

against the morning tints of the bay. Silver-white herring gulls with sun-tipped wings circled in graceful scattered groups across the cove. The old osprey flew from his gnarled tree, poising erect on his tail in mid-air before he shot down arrow-like for his prey.

Glowing with exhilaration, Richard came from his morning bath and quickly dressing turned toward the village through a thicket of sweetbay bushes, that he might inhale the delicious pungency of their leaves which he pulled as he went and crushed in his palm. Skirting the pink-clovered fields where bees droned drowsily in the warm June sunshine, and a bob-o-link poured out his very soul in rollicking song, he came to the far end of the village street, and hastened into a rickety, discouraged-looking small store. He was conscious of a sudden silence and the exchange of looks between tobacco-cuddled village idlers as he passed them at the door with a curt nod. He realized that the news had reached them, doubtless at his mother's funeral, of his break with his father. His preference for the wide outdoors—the uncut forest and alluring bay—to companionship with them had given him a reputation for being "queer." Now he was doubtless judged quite insane by these gentlemen of leisure because of his departure from his father's comfortable home.

But if they could only know just once the exaltation, the joy, the freedom of a real love for the woods as he knew it, how small, how narrow, how impossible their mode of life would seem even to them!

What did they know of real freedom! Nothing, he decided contemptuously. Born and brought up within a stone's throw of some of the most beautiful woods in the world, with wonderful vistas of the ocean and its wild, rock-bound coast, where giant

mountains apparently rose straight from the foam of the sea, these men spent their lives in petty bargaining or, worse still, in discussion of village gossip and slander. Bah, how distasteful they all were to him! What prisoners they were, made so by their own debasing thoughts!

He gathered up the few purchases of food he had made, and with his head thrown back in the old defiant manner characteristic of his attitude toward the world in general, he passed out through the group again, and started toward the woods. Something in the words of one of the men, greeted by coarse laughter from the others, drew his attention, however, and wheeling he strode back.

"Don't let me hear you say a thing like that again!" he said, his black eyes snapping as he stopped in front of a pale, foppishly dressed young giant in the midst of the group.

The young man drew back and doubled up his fists. "It ain't none of *your business*," he said sullenly, cowed by the pure fire of the other's look, but pretending show of fight.

"*It is my business*," Richard answered back. "It's every man's business to keep the air pure from such as you. Such words pollute it! We're all made clean alike—men and women. There *can't* be any difference, and in nature there is none. It's all the same—any uncleanness rests equally on both. And don't you let me hear you mention a woman's name like that! You're not one to throw the first stone, and if I ever hear you utter such words again I'll——"

But he left his threat unfinished. From former like experience Richard knew they understood his attitude toward civilization's basest fault, so what was the use of again expressing himself. He swung on his heel and left them, quoting to himself, "Every prospect

22 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

pleases, and only man is vile." The dread black procession, watched from the edge of the woods, had passed the day before. To-day, free from neighbors' eyes, he could visit the spot where they had laid all that was dearest to him in the world. Up the village street he went till he neared the house that meant so much of sorrow, yet so much of joy to him; then he suddenly left the elm-bordered way and vaulting a fence was quickly lost to sight among the flowering trees of an apple orchard, a mass of bloom.

To Richard's lips, as he took in the exquisite scene, there had involuntarily risen a soft tuneful melody full of the hope of spring, and in spite of the winter of sadness in his heart he yielded to the buoyancy so natural to him and began to sing.

Walking briskly along between the trees he espied a bent old man, his features as gnarled and weather-beaten as their ancient trunks, walking slowly down a lane between them, his gaze fastened upon the ground.

"Good morning, Uncle Silas," he said cheerily, for the old man was a gentle soul whom age had made childish and of whom Richard was fond. "What's the most beautiful, *beautiful* thing in the world?"

Then without waiting for answer he took hold of the other's head and lifting it up made him look at the pink-burdened branches.

"The blue of the sky through the pink of these blossoms," he said. "See!"

"Y—e—s," Uncle Silas quavered slowly. "It *do* be pretty." Then surprised himself at the joy of it he added, continuing to gaze up: "I ain't never noticed it before. It do certainly be pretty."

"Of course it 'do,'" the boy answered gaily. "Why *will* you look down instead of *up*, Uncle Silas? *Why?* *Why?* People 'do' be queer, that's true!" he laughed;

and bounding over the far fence of the little orchard he entered a narrow strip of woodland before the other man had stopped gazing into the sky.

His heart bounded as a scarlet tanager flashed like a beautiful streak of flame into the tree just above his head, paused long enough to warble forth a bit of delicious melody, enchanting the ear as completely as his joyous robe with contrasting black wings did the eye, then flew on until it disappeared into the gray-green of swamp willows bordering an adjoining piece of lowland.

So gay a guide he must surely follow; so hastening in the direction taken by the bird, he parted the willow bushes growing between their taller brothers, and stepped out into a low marshy field where a glory of dancing, nodding buttercups met his gaze, and beyond, where the alders grew undisturbed, belated clusters of marsh marigolds bloomed, still glorious, though their birth month was passed.

Almost unconsciously he began to repeat his mother's favorite poem—one of the many they had learned together:

*"I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills
When all at once I saw a crowd—
A host of golden daffodils
Beside the lake, beneath the trees
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

*Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle in the milky way
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of the bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.*

*The waves beside them danced, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company;*

24 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

*I gazed and gazed, but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought.*

*For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils."*

A sob rose in his throat. - The glory of the summer scene was suddenly blurred, then rudely wiped out. Turning back, he threw himself convulsively face down beneath the willows and buried his head on his arm. How could he, how *could* he stand it without her? She was the only person in all the world who had ever understood and loved him!

It was true the villagers had never liked him. This dislike started among them when he was a mere child. His lack of shyness grated upon them because of their idea that "children must be seen and not heard." He had seldom played with other boys. Straight and tall for his age, with a bravery in his mien and a keenness in his eyes that the other boys could not understand, they feared rather than cared for him. As the years went by and he grew toward young manhood he looked more and more to his mother for the needs of the spirit usually supplied by a boy's friends and comrades. Yet as he looked back now he could not recall much real physical companionship—his father saw to it that she was kept too busy for that. Theirs was more a spiritual communion. Yes, that was it—he *knew* her—they were *alike*—he had always felt so *sure* of her! So he lay, recalling again and again every little gesture, every look of her dear face!

Presently he arose, his eyes wide with memory, and skirting the swamp soon reached the road where it left the village.

At last Dunham vanished behind him and he found

himself alone in a secluded woodland cemetery through which a brook ran joyously, and where nature still held such sway that the few moss-grown mounds, with an occasional lichen-covered headstone among the trees, seemed only a part of its quiet life and restfulness. Unlike the living, the dead of the little coast village found rest in the heart of their woods, and the quaint old place seemed the very essence of happy peacefulness.

Richard entered its box-bordered enclosure reverently, his eyes unconsciously lighting with pleasure at the beautiful spot. Making his way slowly, he soon came to a freshly mounded grave just beneath a big oak where the brook made a companionable sweep inward.

The red earth so recently turned up marred the peaceful scene strangely, and smote the boy's innermost consciousness with distress. His little mother must not sleep there in such unsummered bareness. Hastening nearer the brook he began digging up the wild flowers that grew along its bank, transplanting them until there was no longer the ugly clay spot in the heart of the June greenness, but a veritable flower bed glowing cheerfully.

Smiling, the boy stood back and viewed his handiwork. At the head of the little grave he had planted clusters of anemones, her favorite flower—now drooping on their slender stems as if knowing this and sorrowing because she could not see them. Next these, wild roses bloomed, sweet with the suggestion of her kisses. Then there came clintonia, its pale yellow bells hanging gracefully down into the white faces of bunchberry blossoms; and last "a crowd, a host of daffodils," just above the feet that used to dance so merrily.

He sighed. Nature alone seemed able to cover with beauty ugliness made by the hand of man.

26 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

Working thus for her whom he loved had been a solace to him, and so now as he left the cemetery once more and tramped off into the denseness of the woods his heart felt less bitter than it had for a long, long time, and a soft light glowed in his eyes.

On and on he tramped over baby ferns and wild woods flowers, out into the fields, and then down into the swamps, and yet on into the woods again, a free man with only desire to direct his wandering footsteps. Always he looked eagerly about for any sign of his friends of woods and fields, his heart quickening at the glad sight of them busy about their daily tasks.

Gaily marked pileated woodpeckers, with flaming crests, hammered the trees with their cheery tattoo. Red-winged blackbirds, showing their buff and crimson epaulettes, flew in front of him from reed to reed, as though beckoning him on past the swamp and into the forest. In an orchard through which he passed, a pair of robin redbreasts sang, the male's notes resounding mellow and sweet as they told the nesting mother bird of his springtime love for her. Two humming-birds were there also, and had set up housekeeping in an old apple tree, their little gray-green lichen-covered nest so exactly resembling a knot of the bough that only sharp eyes like Richard's would have discovered it.

Finally as he came to a particularly thickgrown and deserted part of the woods, yet within a stone's throw of the country road, where flowers were unknown and spruce and pine mingled in deep dark ominous silence, he was startled to see two men crouching behind a tree. They did not see him, however; and so he stole stealthily forward, watching them closely as he quickly gained their distance. Presently one of them spoke to the other in a whisper. At that instant Richard

THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN 27

heard the cross-country stage-coach, that ran between Dunham and the other villages along the coast, come rumbling down the road. With a spring forward the men ran from the depths of the trees to the edge of the road, and raising long pistols called in chorus: "Halt! Hands up!"

With heart beating wildly Richard stepped out from his hiding, and eagerly rushed forward just in time to see the stage driver drop his reins and raise his hands above his head.

The occupants of the stage with white faces followed his example, and the two highwaymen stepped closer.

"All out," they called. "Step lively, and keep your hands up!"

Like a drove of frightened sheep a half-dozen elderly men began filing from the vehicle. Richard, too interested to think of his own safety, stood wide-eyed just back of the highwaymen, who were unconscious of his presence.

"Father!" he gasped in surprise under his breath, as he saw Deacon Dennison step from the coach.

He was white and shaking, and his hands, raised like the rest at the instant of command, had now weakly dropped to his throat, where they picked and fumbled at each other as he swallowed hard in his terror.

"Hands up, there!" one of the robbers yelled at him, waving the pistol in his direction. "No foolishness!"

Trembling as though with ague the man once more put both hands above his head, while there broke from his lips a low whimpering sound like a cowed dog. Tears overbrimmed his weak eyes, and dropping to his knees he groveled at the robber's feet, keeping up

28 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

a low, whining pleading that his life, his life devoted to good works for the Lord, be spared!

With a feeling of utter disgust at his father's display of cowardice, Richard felt a wave of contemptuous anger come surging over him, while there came also the realization that now was *his* chance to take advantage of the upper hand that Fate had thus given him, and by scaring his father still more to pay back in part the debt he felt he owed him for all his years of bullying toward his mother.

Not until long afterward did the boy understand that it was this very same quality which he despised in his father, and inherited from him, that had made him act as he did now.

Stepping toward the groveling man his eyes sparkled with malicious amusement. Taking his position over him just as the other recognized him, he said to the highwaymen:

"I'll take care of this one. I'm with you in this game!"

Then to his captive, with a grim smile that, had he but known it, changed his whole likeness to his mother into a striking likeness to his father, he said in command: "Keep still. You owe me this much—you *coward!*"

Suddenly a shot rang out clear and sharp through the echoing woods. The guarding highwayman dropped without a murmur.

Another shot, quick upon the heels of the first, left the second man with a dangling arm.

"Hell!" he muttered, as his pistol dropped from his relaxed fingers and he made a spring for the bushes.

Immediately Richard found himself seized, and felt the cold of steel as handcuffs clicked about his wrists and the muzzle of a gun was pressed against his neck.

"Steady there, my friend!" he heard a voice ex-

claim, and looking around saw Dunham's chief sheriff glaring down at him, and heard as in a dream the voices of all the rest raised in excited babble as a few of them rushed madly after the escaping criminal.

For a moment a feeling of terror swept through the boy, but looking the sheriff squarely in the eyes his head went back.

"Remove these handcuffs," he tersely demanded.

The sheriff guffawed.

"Not much! We know *now* why our highbrow 'naturalist' is so dreadful fond of the woods!"

Richard's face crimsoned furiously, but holding his temper in check he repeated with forced calm: "Remove these things! You know I was only fooling. Why, I haven't even got a gun! Remove them, I say!"

The sheriff sobered and looked at the defiant boy keenly, while the other men crowded around, all talking at once.

"See here, Dick," he said, "there ain't any use of your using that tone to *me*. Quit it, and come along!" and he shoved the boy toward the coach. "You were caught red-handed, and neighbor or no neighbor it's up to me to see you get to the place you belong! Foolin' indeed! Humph! Get along with you!" and he gave the boy another shove.

Richard stumbled forward. By now the others of the party who had run after the escaping highwayman returned unsuccessful, and Deacon Dennison, having regained his composure, spoke.

"God shall be my cowardly son's judge," he said, entirely his righteous and important self now that all danger was passed. "He, in the fulness and strength of his youth, hath attacked me, oh Lord, strong in Thy good works, but weak with the infirmity of encroaching years——"

Then catching sight of the boy's openly scornful

30 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

expression at these words, following as they had upon his whimpering display of cowardice, he paused.

The boy's lips again twitched, and the man seeing them forgot the onlookers he wished to impress—for-got his pose of the humble Christian martyr. His anger blazed, and in the voice that had broken his wife's spirit he cried angrily:

"Get in the coach!" and gave the boy a quick push forward. "I'll not help you one iota!" Then regaining some of his old-time righteous pompousness he said, with heavenward rolling eyes:

"God's wrath shall be poured out upon you! He will chastise you with His almighty and unerring vengeance."

Then again forgetting himself, he shouted in his bullying anger: "Get in, I say. The law shall take its course!"

CHAPTER III

THE trial in the hot, dirty little court-room was over. The jury had rendered its verdict that Richard Denison was guilty of the crime charged, attempted highway robbery, and sentence was about to be pronounced.

The pitiless sun beat down upon the low tin-roofed structure, and made the fumes of the huddled, perspiring crowd of Dunham villagers arise sickeningly, while with sinister wagging of their heads and accusing eyes they looked at the boy, who sat, chin held high, returning their gaze in defiance.

The judge paused before pronouncing sentence, and turning toward the prisoner on the platform said:

"While it rests not with me to render judgment of the guilt or innocence of the accused before the bar of justice, that being the province of the jury, I cannot forbear to affirm that I personally do not believe this boy to be morally guilty, in spite of the fact that the evidence adduced has established a technical commission of the crime for which he was indicted."

With a visible start, Richard quickly turned his head until his gaze met that of the judge; and then, a sudden wave of exquisite, surprised gratitude surged through him, and his face became suffused with an eager, almost smiling, light. Gripping his hands together, he leaned toward the judge; a pathetically grateful look illuminating his black eyes. These words of the man who was about to pronounce sentence upon him were the first kind words he had heard since his mother's death just before that day in early June when his own father's hands had helped to make him a pris-

oner. All through the stifling weeks in the filthy, over-crowded county jail, and during the days in court that followed, Richard had found his heart growing more and more bitter with hatred, while scorn of the whole village and its injustice seemed fairly burning his life away! Could it be true, then, that he had made a friend of this judge, he wondered to himself? Made a friend of the man whom his father hated? He went back over the few times he could remember Judge Sawyer's name being mentioned in his home, and the unreasonable anger it always evoked in his father. He recalled also the fact that he had heard his mother say that the judge and she were childhood playmates, and that he had been off at college when she had married. But oh, how little Richard really knew! The judge had never married! Perhaps that was it, his mind telegraphed his heart. Perhaps the judge remembered his childhood friendship, and—

No matter if he did sentence him—as it now seemed all too plain that he would have to do. Nothing mattered, really, if he, Richard, could only feel that some one whom his mother had cared for, even a little, believed him innocent!

With a renewed wave of gratitude, a gratitude fraught with longing tenderness toward this just man, Richard sat and gazed up at him, while Judge Sawyer continued, addressing the jury:

"You who have sat in judgment upon this boy, look to it that your hearts bear no malice or bitterness, and that your consciences approve before the Almighty God the verdict your foreman has delivered in your behalf. Let a poll of the jury be taken!"

Amid a stillness oppressive in its absoluteness, each juror in turn was called upon to arise and answer whether or no the verdict rendered by the foreman was his own. In each case the answer was in the

affirmative. The judge turned and addressed the people assembled in the court-room:

"Yes," his deep-toned voice boomed out, "personally, I believe Richard Dennison morally innocent; but as the judge of this court, and with due regard for my oath of office, I have to recognize the verdict of the jury, and now must pronounce sentence required by that verdict. The verdict is in accordance with the weight of evidence, no evidence offsetting that offered by the prosecution having been produced. But you, his neighbors, are not so bound. In the true meaning of the Scriptures, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'

"Richard Dennison, have you anything to say why sentence should not be pronounced in accordance with the verdict of the jury?" And he looked encouragement toward the throbbing boy.

For a moment a sickening fear passed through Richard, and then catching the fire in the other's dauntless eyes a flame darted up into his own. He felt himself fairly lifted to his feet and urged forward. Clear-eyed he stood and looked slowly about him, apparently studying each and every one of the throng of strained faces before him.

An uneasy murmured ripple ran through the crowd at his keen, cold stare; but Richard was unconscious of it, as he was of his surroundings, for in that sea of human countenances he saw only a few here and there, faces that suddenly stung him into a fury that he himself hardly understood.

Just in front of where he stood on the platform, almost level with his feet, Richard saw the weak eyes and sneering mouth of the blond giant of his encounter of a few weeks before. He was foppishly dressed now, as then, and regarded Richard with an air of complacent innocence that knows not the meaning of guilt.

34 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

Richard ground his teeth together at the sight; then his eyes wandered from the fop until, coming to rest on the pretty but painted face of a girl in a far-off corner of the room, his gaze softened with sympathy.

In memory he saw those two faces, so far apart now, touch in the betrothal kiss. The cold light of the court-room once more showed them to him as they really were—the man's free of care, the outcast girl's scarleted forever!

An anger and bitterness the strength of which he had never known before opened Richard's lips, and looking at the man in such a way that no onlooker could mistake his meaning, he said:

"To-morrow I go to State's Prison. I am innocent—but that's beside the mark. If I wasn't—how does stealing a purse compare with stealing something more precious than life itself?" And he shuddered with repugnance, then exclaimed bitterly:

"One's a crime—the other's—*Hell*—but not worth punishing or preventing!! Oh, no," and his lips twisted, though his clear eyes continued to pierce those of the fop's for a moment more before swiftly sweeping over the astonished crowd. Meeting those of an imbecile boy, they paused.

"The sentence for taking life is death," he said in a voice that could not but thrill his listeners, "but how about the crime of *creating life* in an hour of wantonness. Isn't that more deserving of that sentence?"

There was dead silence, and he went on in his biting tones: "In this town there are three generations of degenerates in one family, besides four imbeciles and a blind child in others. *We know who their parents are,*" and his eyes picked out several uneasy men in the throng. "But are *they* locked up? Oh, no! Are these pitiful offspring considered dangerous to be at large? Did any of you ever try to prevent

THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN 35

the third generation of that family breeding with a drunkard and starting a fourth? Oh, no, they were legally *married!* I go to State's Prison to-morrow, but they——”

“Stop!” a man's voice at last broke the horrified stillness, and one of Dunham's ministers arose midst an uneasy shuffling of feet. “You cannot talk like this. It is infamous! You should be punished for contempt of court.”

“I believe that lies in *my jurisdiction*, not yours!” Judge Sawyer broke in shortly, his mouth stern, but his eyes darting a look of admiration toward the defiant prisoner.

“Richard Dennison, you may proceed.”

The minister paused in surprise; then furious, stalked from the court-room, and Dick's clear-cut staccato voice went on:

“Last year one sot killed another sot in a drunken brawl. The slayer was given a life sentence. Last year the beautiful garden of childhood was ruthlessly entered and purity snatched out by the roots. That fiend's maximum sentence would have been ten years; but he was let out on bail before trial and escaped!!

“There are dozens of other crimes, non-criminal by law,” and he smiled bitterly; “but, of course, they don't amount to anything! Ministers and parents not attending to their jobs, for instance, because, ostrich-like, they refuse to see evil; therefore evil does not exist! There is legitimate ‘petty larceny.’ Some of the storekeepers here can tell you what I mean,” and again his sharp eyes went from face to face.

“Then ‘larceny’ by character stealing, and the stealing of happiness, slandering—gossip—to say nothing of trying to dwarf all individuality in the younger generation——”

A number of well-upholstered matrons, righteously

36 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

indignant, rose to go, but fascinated by the boy's look lingered on.

Over near the door Deacon Dennison sat with mouth dropping open, for once in his life entirely unconscious of himself in his amazement at his son.

"I am going to State's Prison to-morrow, marked for life as a '*criminal*,'" Richard's voice went on as he now stared openly at his father. "But to kill a beautiful spirit, to—to—"

Then he broke down, and, swallowing hard, turned toward the judge in dumb appeal. Over him there had suddenly come the realization of what the whole scene really meant to him. Recalling his mother's gentle spirit, his heart choked the bitter words on his lips. His fingers involuntarily fumbled at his shirt front until he found the locket and touched it reverently. The man who had ruined her happiness in life sat dumbly before him, too surprised to be able to answer back. This was undoubtedly Richard's opportunity to pay in part the debt of scorn and hatred he owed for her sake. Yet for the life of him he could not bring himself to say one bitter word! It was as though her gentle fingers had been placed across his lips!

The sympathetic judge took in the situation at a glance.

"All right, son," he said brusquely; "you've had *your* say. Now I must perform my duty. The sentence of the court, pursuant to the statutes in such case made and provided, is that you must serve ten years in State's Prison. Sergeant, lead the prisoner from court. My boy, I'll come to see you after court adjourns.

"The next case on the calendar is Johnson against Morgan——"

But Richard, tall and straight, head held defiantly,

looking neither to right nor left, marched with the officer down the room.

From the side windows as he passed them he saw that the sky had grown black. Great jagged streaks of lightning split through the angry clouds, and a far-off ominous roar shook the horizon. "He's coming to see me to-night, tho'," his heart sang in spite of the vague feeling that this outdoor scene was prophetic.

But as shadow melted into deeper shadow and the early moon rose to peep through swiftly sailing ghost clouds and in between the bars of his dirty cell, Richard waited in vain for the kindly judge.

Going toward home, the judge's horse had become frightened—had shied—and now a dark form lay face down among the underbrush of the roadside, while the boy's bitter disappointment grew to gall!!

* * * * *

Dawn broke gray and depressing. The sun peered through a rift for a moment, and then seemingly discouraged at the outlook hid behind a nearby cloud. Youthful morning turned old and gray with despair.

Richard sat near the little barred window, his eyes fastened upon the view of vacant village lots and shambling shanties that ran back of the jail. All through the long night he had stared out, his eyes scarcely once changing the direction of their gaze. For him there could be no sleep. Even now his mind did not take in that which his eyes saw, nor did he realize that he saw at all, so numbed was he by the battle which was raging in his heart.

Was it possible, was it *possible*, his mind kept asking passionately of itself, that he was to spend ten years of his life shut in like this? Was he, nature's freeman, to see the sky only as strips of blue be-

tween the black of prison bars? Was he really to be made to suffer for a crime he had not committed?

No, no! his heart raged, a thousand times no! It simply *could not* be! He would presently awake to find himself out on the ocean's edge once more, with the perfume of summer blossoms in his nostrils. Looking up into a vastness of glorious blue, he would see the snowy gulls circling and turning. He would see his old friend the osprey fly from his stark sentinel tree as usual, and poising a moment in mid air go plunging head down toward the sparkling water of the bay!

But at last, raising his eyes, Richard scanned the horizon through his prison bars. It looked leaden color. The bars seemed pressing inward, crowding nearer and nearer him, until he seemed to feel their blackening stripes upon his very soul. He suddenly felt he must scream—must tear them away and look into the clear, uninterrupted heavens—or go mad! He jumped up from the bench on which he sat, and pressing his face between the bars tried to rid his vision of them and see the landscape free of their marring blackness; but the space between them was too small, and try as he would he could not avoid their imprisoning sight. God! How could he stand it!

Then words, idle words he had heard, he knew not where, but all his life, came to him as he stood there staring from the prison window: "Society must be protected."

Well, of course, that was true, his justice agreed; and yet—yet—

The fallen girl's face rose before him vividly!—the imbecile boy's—the village drunkard's—

He gave a harsh, wild laugh. Society protected, indeed!

Taking hold of the bars with both hands, he shook them crazily, his body swaying in his wild, maniacal burst of anger, his black eyes snapping. Yes, Society must be protected; but—

He laughed wildly again, and swayed back and forth more violently. The dim, ill-smelling cell looked red—the whole world looked red—something was snapping in his head—

"Here, cut that out!" a coarse voice demanded, and whirling about Richard saw the jailer stride up, adjust a key, and begin unlocking his cell.

The heavy door creaked on its hinges, cried squeakingly, then swung outward, and two officers and the jailer stepped in.

"Off we go, my young naturalist, to the Pen!" the jailer said as, roughly seizing Richard's hands, he helped one of the officers click handcuffs about his wrists. The other man as successfully locked anklers about both legs.

"Ten years away from them birds and animiles in the woods is a pretty good spell—ain't it?" winking at his companions, who broke forth into a loud roar at the clever thrust. "Yer studies and 'observations of nater' will have to be a little different now, I reckon."

But with the fury born of his wild despair Richard flung the men off in spite of his shackles and, standing in the middle of the cell, hands clenched, eyes darting fire, the veins in his temples swelled and purpled:

"Take these things off," he demanded.

For a moment the men, astonished by the boy's sudden attack, stood where he had pushed them, and then the jailer reached out his hairy hand and grabbed him by the shoulder. Richard winced under his grasp, but in a clear, calm voice repeated: "Take these off,

40 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

or you'll have trouble with me. I'll go, but not shackled!"

The jailer guffawed at this assertion as though it were a huge joke. "You'll go, will yer? But not this way, ha, ha! Well, I'll be da——" But before he could finish his sentence Richard had raised both hands, shackled as they were, and with an upward and backward sweep brought them down heavily upon the man's hand where it lay upon his shoulder.

With a muttered oath at the crack of the steel upon his offending knuckles the jailer's merriment turned to rage, and raising his club he struck the boy full upon the top of his head!

Richard crumpled up upon the floor and lay still.

CHAPTER IV

FLANKED on either side by the two officers to whom he was now handcuffed, Richard went down the wooden steps of the jail. Although only a little while before, looking from his prison bars, he had thought the world was dull gray, now he saw that the sun had burst through the clouds and turned it to gold. As he stepped out into its full blaze the prospect seemed to his imaginative mind to promise a brighter future. Letting his heart respond to the call of nature, he

looked eagerly about him, a smile upon his lips.

The tumbled down shanties back of the jail no longer looked as they had looked when he saw them from his barred window. The magic of the quickening sun had kissed them into a happy semblance of homes. Their very untidiness seemed to him comfortable, like a much-lived-in room made half shabby and all awry by the playful carelessness of children. Their windows were kindly eyes looking peacefully out upon the summer world. Every blade of grass in the sparse jail-yard stood erect and joyful with freedom, belated broad-faced dandelions peeping up cheerfully all about. An old apple tree, blighted the year before by storms, was holding aloft new shoots laden with leaves, determined not to be discouraged by the hardness of fate. High up on one of these there swung and sang joyously a warbling vireo, filled with glee.

As the sun touched his olive back, turning it into a shimmering bronze, Richard recalled Wordsworth's "Ode to the Green Linnet"; and much to his companions' surprise burst into recitation:

*"Beneath these fruit tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms o'er my head,
With brightest sunshine 'round me spread
In Spring's unclouded weather;*

42 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

*In a sequestered nook how sweet
To sit upon my orchard seat,
And birds and flowers once more to greet
My last year's friends together.*

One have I marked, the happiest guest—”

Then as the bird, in seeming answer to his greeting, flew from the apple-tree over his head to a roadside tree, Richard interrupted his recital a moment to follow its flight with his eyes; then continued:

*“Amid yon tuft of hazel trees
That twinkle in the gusty breeze,
Behold him, perched in ecstasies—”*

“Here, you,” one of the officers finally said, recovering from the half-awed silence that rhythmical sound is apt to produce in the unlearned. “Stop that! You ain’t no play actor. You’re a prisoner.”

But Richard, his eyes illumined, his whole face strangely transfigured, went on, unheeding. It was a poem he and his mother had loved to say together, and now it seemed to him that she was very near:

*“My dazzled sight he oft deceives,
A brother to the dancing leaves;
Then flits, and from the cottage eaves
Pours forth his song in gushes—”*

“That will do, I say,” the second officer insisted, giving Richard a rough jerk forward. “Shut up and march along.”

This unexpected indication of oblivion to the fate which had overtaken Richard now only passed for part of his generally accepted queerness. Yet it was remarkable that the rough men had walked by his side so silently while he repeated these verses; but as music will oftentimes calm the insane, so Richard’s deep-toned voice had affected these brutal officers of the law!

Down the street they walked. Richard, now silent, seemed to be in a trance at the sights and sounds of the pulsing world that crowded everything else from his mind. He made no effort to think. Even the shackles on his wrists gave him no sense of weight or restraint, and his heart felt the same impulse that prompted the bird's song as his physical nature responded to the external stimuli so akin to it.

"Song! Bloom! The whole world rejoices. No future can be wholly black in a world so flooded with glorious light!" And listening only to his heart the boy momentarily forgot his anguish of coming imprisonment, forgot everything but the happiness that came to him from the sweet, clean air and smell of flowering things. In the face of God's outdoors in all her matchless glory he could not even conceive of anything but freedom.

So now, walking abroad after weeks of imprisonment, as he neared the heart of the village where faces began to appear at the windows as though summoned by the slanderous-tongued bird of gossip, flown by magic from house to house, he did not see nor realize the cruel looks in his direction, and marched between the officers, exalted and happy in the freshness of the early morning.

The men flanking his sides, intensely aware of the fact that their blue uniforms stood for the Law, plumed themselves vain-gloriously and looked from side to side with prideful self-conscious glances as they conducted Richard down the street. The boy's heart was on fire with the purity and splendor of real freedom, that of the *spirit*, as he took in every sight and sound of the blossoming day; yet he was held a prisoner by men who knew not the meaning of such freedom.

Suddenly a shadow was thrown sharply down their

44 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

pathway, and Richard saw his father's gaunt figure standing directly between him and the sun, alert, but motionless, awaiting their approach. As they came abreast Richard's eyes stared defiantly into the eyes on a level with his own, and his lips compressed themselves into a straight line not unlike those of the older man. With pious intonation the latter said:

"My son, I forgive you. Go in peace. The just and righteous anger of the Almighty be upon you! Let it chasten you into humbleness——"

But he got no further, for throwing his chin up proudly Richard's defiance broke forth.

"I don't want or need your forgiveness! Stand aside and let me pass!" and he strode forward, swinging out and around his father. Angered as always by the boy's lack of fear of him, the deacon purpled with rage, and forgetting himself completely shook his fist after Richard, calling out curses and maledictions upon him.

The officers were nonplussed. They were accustomed at such last meetings between father and son to see the wayward one burst into a hysterical fit of grief and shame; so now they could not help but expect that just such a melodramatic climax must surely be enacted in Richard's drama. Unaware of the actual relations that had always existed between them, his father stood in their minds, as he did in the minds of the community, for uprightness and just dealing. Yet he was not popular and had no real friends. It was a well-known fact that no one in Dunham could drive a closer bargain than could Deacon Dennison. He had been known to turn out non-paying renters in the dead of winter. There were rumors of a not too pious past. Even now a man nearly twice Richard's age, and nameless, but full of virile courage, had slowly climbed from shamed ob-

scurity to the top of things in the next village, whence he had gone to a neighboring state, there to become a power in spite of the conditions of his birth. But all such matters counted for little in the face of the fact that John Dennison was a deacon, a pillar of the leading village church, the town's principal banker, and its mayor as well. He had a finer house than any one else, and so many men in his power that none dared dispute his right to pre-eminence. The mercilessness of his character was not yet realized by his neighbors.

So now the more talkative of the two officers said to Richard, in tones of shocked paternalism:

"Ain't you goin' to tell your father good-bye? Him that helped to bear you?"

"No," Richard answered curtly, striding on, impatiently quickening his steps and so obliging the men to do the same.

The two officers eyed each other furtively as though asking silently what their duty was under the circumstances; then the more kindly of them spoke. He himself had done the world the honor to help people it with seven offspring, and therefore, convinced of the greatness of the mated male, was in a position to know how lacking in all natural goodness Richard must be not to feel worshipful gratitude toward his begetter.

"It's your duty," he urged, trying, but not daring, to slacken his pace. "It's your duty to say good-bye to your own pa, who has done so much for you!"

Immediately he was sorry he had spoken, for Richard's queerly disconcerting gaze was upon him.

"You think I should love my father, don't you?" he asked, with a piercing look into the other's eyes.

"Sure," the officer replied, relieved at the normality of the question which he had secretly feared would

46 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

be an outburst like that which he had witnessed the day before in court.

"A son should always love his father just because he is his father—shouldn't he?" Richard again asked bluntly. "And a father does 'so much' for his son by just being his father, doesn't he?"

"Sure," the other repeated, though vaguely troubled at Richard's manner.

"Well, how about the honor done the father by the son's just being his son?" a half light of amusement at the other's vacant look kindling for a moment in Richard's eyes, to as quickly die.

"Can't bring your mind to dwell on such a puzzling situation, eh? Well, no matter. Don't strain yourself!" Then more defiantly: "It's just another of civilization's empty sentimentalisms. A son has to worship blindly and acclaim the father who gave him birth whether that father is fit or not! Otherwise the son is 'disrespectful to old age.'"

Then in an undertone, more to himself, he went on: "What is old age, anyway, that youth should fairly hold its breath with respect in its presence? Old age is only the *equal* of youth. The one is going toward the Great Beyond, the other has just come from the Great Beyond!"

By now they had reached the little railroad station, and Richard looked up in realizing despair. For the first time he clearly perceived his actual situation. A feeling of such desperate discouragement and desolation overcame him that he felt he must surely die!

Going to prison! Traveling toward the shutting away of sunlight and flowers, of clean air and the liberty of deep green woods!

He felt as he had on those dread nights of childhood when sometimes he would awake to feel the four smothering walls of his nursery crowding down

upon him. There had been no relief from the nightmare till he had slipped out of the house, and felt the cool night air upon his face, and looked up into the freedom of the star-studded heavens.

Was it possible that his body could keep on living with his mind so full of the tortured pictures of the agony to come?

The sun went behind a cloud. The train thundered in.

* * * * *

Throughout the short journey Richard had sat in absorbed, motionless dumbness, even the lovely vistas of woods and streams and fields, seen from the car windows, failing to arouse him. The train had sped rapidly away from Dunham and on through forests of firs and pines, then through clearings and broad farm-lands, with an occasional brook or dancing daisyfield to charm the eye, followed once more by boundless forest stretches. The kaleidoscopic scenes changed and changed again, each as lovely as the last; and then it had begun to rain. Soon the windows became splashed and grimy, and it was only occasionally that the dripping woods and tearfully bending flowers could be glimpsed through their cloudedness. But Richard had not tried to look out. Having fallen into a deeply brooding silence, he had paid no heed to the train as it jerked spasmodically along the wet rails, nor to the curious-eyed strangers, his fellow-travelers.

Finally, however, by the gruff commands of his guards, he was made aware of the fact that they had arrived at their destination. With a sinking of the heart that caused him mental vagueness he left the car and felt, rather than saw, that he was out upon the station platform, the rain blowing in his flushed face.

When his feet touched the yielding surface of the wet earth his youthful hopes reasserted themselves in spite of him, and raising his eyes he darted a quick look about him, only to feel a strong revulsion at the scene he saw and an oppression that weighed upon him heavily.

"The end," his mind whispered to his soul as from a resounding sepulchre. "Life cannot exist here." As he looked about him he saw nothing but dismal dreariness and unrelieved monotony. What had once been a beautiful forest had been destroyed. Not a tree remained. In its stead was the far-reaching desolation of a man-made plain, in the center of which stood a grim gray prison behind walls that reared themselves darkly against the paler gray of the sky. The low-lying buildings suggested to Richard the sinister crouch of a wild animal made ready for its death spring, or a demon, half devil, half man, crouching in wait for its prey! The scene looked as black and degrading to purity of thought as crime itself. Richard seemed to feel all the good in him shrink away in revolt. Every softening caress which Nature and her father, Time, are wont to bestow upon man's devastation had apparently been thwarted or uprooted; for not a sprig or spray, flower or single blade of grass could be seen. Righteous man, in his effort to protect himself against any possible escape of *unrighteous* man to the sheltering woods, had deliberately scarred and defiled the face of Mother Earth with an entirety of destructiveness which human beings alone know. The building of that prison was a crime which had been enacted in the name of justice, and supposedly stood a monument for the upbuilding of virtue. Instead, it suggested, in its ugly barrenness, *vice alone!* Could the angels who cast the Prince of Darkness from Paradise have chosen another place than Hades to which to

consign him for eternity, this spot so prepared would have been most propitious; for, in outward aspect at least, it suggested naught but evil, desolation, and revolting ugliness. And though this was not yet apparent to Richard, its external features but typified its essential character. Built to protect Society against the criminal, it had become Society's Frankenstein, making and turning out the very thing it sought to repress!

Striding on dumbly between the two officers Richard presently reached and entered the barred gates that opened at his approach like the hungry jaws of the crouching monsters symbolized by the buildings. A big burly man in uniform took him in charge from the not unwilling hands of his guards, and, with a few coarse jesting remarks, conducted him across the stone-flagged court-yard, in which he saw a group of blear-eyed, lolling-tongued blood-hounds savagely straining at their leashes.

Very soon they reached the entrance of the main building, and with a command to Richard to precede him, they entered and closed the door. Richard noticed just ahead of them another door marked "Warden." Opening this, his new guide half shoved, half led Richard through it, and he found himself standing in front of an elderly man seated at a desk.

The guide saluted respectfully, and, looking up, without so much as a greeting, the warden asked Richard a curt question.

"It's the new prisoner from Dunham, sir," the guide volunteered, handing him some papers delivered by the Dunham officers. And peering up at Richard near-sightedly, the warden continued:

"Name?"

"Richard Dennison," the boy answered dazedly.

"Your father's?"

50 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

Richard flushed, but answered "John Dennison."

"You say 'Sir' to *me*," the man warned shortly.
"Your mother?"

Richard's eyes blazed, flared. "Her name's to be left out of this," he said defiantly.

The warden looked up sharply from the paper on which he had been scribbling Richard's answers. "No impertinence!" he said shortly. "Answer my questions!"

A feeling of utter hopelessness and degradation unlike anything which the courageous boy had ever experienced before swept over him, and with surprise Richard heard himself answer meekly: "Margaret Marshall." Was it possible that the oppression of the ill-smelling place was already laying hands upon him?

"Age?" The warden's hard voice broke in upon his thoughts.

"Eighteen," Richard again answered.

"History of crime?"

For a moment Richard stared, really puzzled; but the warden, thinking it only another display of impertinence on his part, scowled deeply and raising his voice repeated the question, enunciating every word sharply.

"If I told you the truth," Richard said coldly, "you'd call it a lie. The truth you and the law want *is* a lie." Then more cynically: "Why question a prisoner anyway? In your estimation, is a criminal capable of telling the truth?"

The warden flushed and bit his lips for control, but said patiently, "Young fellow, this isn't a very auspicious beginning for a life wherein obedience is paramount to all else. You won't find things made any easier if you start monkey business with that tongue of yours to me! Don't you know, you young fool, that I have absolute power over you? You don't

belong to the State any longer. You belong to me! I'm the boss of this ranch and my advice to you is to answer my questions and pretty quick, too! What were you sent up for?"

"Highway robbery," Richard answered, and the warden, scribbling down that information without comment, handed a slip of paper to his conductor, then turned back to his desk.

The man took it and, with a respectful nod to his superior, gruffly commanded Richard to walk ahead of him. Out from the main building they went, crossed the court-yard, and entered another building on the opposite side. Here, in a large room in full view of passers-by, with no screens or any other mode of protection, Richard was commanded to undress. This he began to do so slowly and with so much show of reluctance that his guard lost patience and practically tore his clothes off, and, making them into a bundle, disappeared from the room. Fearing lest his locket be taken also, Richard surreptitiously slipped it beneath his tongue while the guard was out. A few minutes later the guard returned with a prison outfit in his hands, which he ordered Richard to don. Looking to see what he had brought, Richard discovered a coarse and worn set of underclothes, a pair of clumsy boots, and a much-used black-and-white-striped uniform reeking with dirt.

"I'll not wear these!" he exclaimed furiously, turning sick with disgust at the sight of their unlaundered condition, and the crawling vermin in plain view upon them.

"We'll jes' see, my young dandy," his burly guard exclaimed; and catching the boy by the arms forced the shirt over his frantically struggling shoulders.

"I'll not stand it!" Richard panted, struggling desperately. "The filthy rags!"

52 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

But having become unmanageable by now, his companion greatly simplified matters by knocking him down with his loaded stick and putting the clothing on him while he was yet unable to rise.

When Richard had recovered from this gently persuasive argument, he was led out into another corridor, and saw ahead of him another glass door, this time marked "Principal Keeper." Through this his guard pushed him, stopping his stumbling entrance with a jerk that brought him up directly in front of a grizzly, ill-kempt man, who at once proceeded to propound him a series of questions much as the warden had done. Scribbling his answers in a greatly be-thumbed ledger, the keeper added to his questions others pertaining to Richard's religion and the life and habits of his ancestors.

"Married?"

"No," Richard answered.

"Look here, boy," the principal keeper said. "I am 'Sir' to you. It ain't going to help you any to be disrespectful to your betters. We don't treat criminals like pampered sick folks in this here institution! We make 'em *repent*. There ain't no 'soft soap' here. How many terms have you served?"

Richard's eyes darted fire at this way of putting the question; but he answered with evident control: "None."

"You mean to say this is your first offense?"

"Yes."

The Principal Keeper's lips curled into an amused sneer, and he held his pen suspended in air as he exclaimed jocosely: "Now tell the truth, son, and shame the devil for once!"

It was evident to Richard that that was just exactly what such men as these keepers had no wish that a prisoner should do; and his anger welling up

at the injustice of their whole attitude, he exclaimed, as he had exclaimed to the warden :

"Truth? Who would believe me if I did tell the truth!" and he laughed. The place and what he had gone through were beginning to excite him just as the Dunham jail had done. "Truth, indeed! Isn't it part of your 'system' to disbelieve everything a prisoner says just because he *is* a prisoner? I could tell you any old lie I please anyhow, and how would you know the difference? Do you always make up your prison statistics in the manner you and the warden, to say nothing of this brute, have employed toward me? If so, and you don't believe prisoners *can* tell the truth, what earthly good are your statistics? If I told you I had had eight wives and, like Blue Beard, murdered them all of a summer's evening; or that I had broken into all the banks in New York City and gone to Paris on the proceeds, would you know the difference, or believe me?" he asked in indignant wrath. Then, with a deeper sneer he continued before the disconcerted man could stop him :

"You doubtless would believe *that!* If a prisoner tells a black enough record to satisfy his self-satisfied questioner, he is believed perhaps; but if he happens to have a white record and tells it, as in my case—what then? All of which is part and parcel of the same sane and merciful justice I've been bucking up against the past few weeks!" And he again laughed scornfully, staring at the man with defiance.

The keeper had sat in open-mouthed astonishment at the boy's tirade. He was so used to crushed and dejected prisoners if coming in to serve for their first offense, or deliberately surly and profane ones if for their second, that he could not at all understand this boy's attitude. Now, however, his over-developed sense of importance coming uppermost, it produced in

54 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

him the thought that the boy was simply disrespectful. His anger, therefore, arising in proportion to the indignity he conceived had been done his all-powerful personage, he exclaimed roughly:

"That will do for you!" And turning he took from his desk a printed card, and a metal badge bearing a number.

"Here's the rules of this prison. Read 'em. And if you know what's good for your hide you'll abide by 'em—and no more back talk, neither! Your number is xx29x. Your cell, 13. Corporal, take him in to the chaplain. Reckon he needs a little soul's salvation all right." And without further ado he directed his attention to the next prisoner, who had just been brought in.

Richard and his guard went on to an office next to that of the principal keeper. The boy felt an increased disgust encompass him at sight of the sanctimonious-faced man garbed like a priest, smirking and rubbing his plump unmanly hands together in a typically clerical manner. There was obvious insincerity in the pretended warmth of brotherly greetings offered Richard, and his beady, shifting eyes took in Richard's figure with a coldness of expression that alone would have marked the man as a hypocrite. Then impressively, in the well-drilled but utterly indifferent tone of a second-rate actor reciting a part for the thousandth time:

"My son, may God's mercy rest upon you and make you answer truthfully, telling me fully all thine iniquities. May you repent of your ways and see the light that has guided so many faltering footsteps to the Throne of Glory. My son, may He——"

"I'm not your son," Richard heard himself break in impatiently, and was immediately rewarded by a quick change in the man before him.

In fussy, high-toned annoyance, the chaplain sputtered and scolded vehemently, and turning to a stenographer he said: "Take this boy's criminal history. I won't question such an impudent upstart." And for the third time Richard began to be plied with the same old questions:

"Your name?"

"My name," he said solemnly, a grim amusement gleaming in his somber eyes, "is Beelzebub Black. My father's was Balaam Bartholomew. I'm eighty-six years old and I murdered all eight of my wives one Summer's evening not long ago. After that I robbed the United States Treasury and went to Paris on the proceeds. Anything else you would like to ask me?"

"Humph. Bughouse!" the chaplain commented unsympathetically. "Better get him along to the doctor," speaking to Richard's guard, but handing Richard a Bible.

"This is God's Holy Word, my son," he again said in his stage tone of benevolence. "Take it with my blessing, study it, and repent. And now you may go in peace. Amen."

And thereupon Richard's spiritual adviser turned to the task upon his desk—that of writing pious sentiments on the fly-leaf of another Bible for a feminine admirer who came to the prison in pretense of converting the prisoners, but whose emotional fervor generally spent itself long before she reached them. "The poor, dear, unselfish chaplain" alone receiving her merciful ministrations. Had she but known it, the poor, dear, unselfish chaplain had tried every other possible job and failed; therefore, he had been "called" here, where he could fail with perfect impunity, for nobody could expect that real talent should be wasted on mere *criminals* when the "Heathen"

56 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

Chinese," and others, remained unconverted to Christianity.

At the command of his guide Richard, more outraged and defiant than ever, went into the doctor's office. This kindly little man smiled up at him immediately, and seeing this Richard's own face took on a brighter look in sympathy. Again he was asked the same old questions, but this time he answered them as directly as possible.

"Pull off your clothes, my boy," the doctor said in a brisk but not unkindly tone. "That's it," as Richard silently obeyed. "Now we'll see what health the State's new charge has got. It must be pretty good to stand this place——"

Then he bit his lips and left his remark unfinished to say instead: "You've lived in the open mostly, eh?"

"Yes, sir," Richard answered, picturing to himself the bay with its rock-bound coast at the doctor's question. Was it possible, he wondered to himself, that he would not see this for ten years? A lump rose in his throat.

The doctor found Richard in perfect physical condition, and his eyes lighted up with involuntary admiration of the boy's clean-limbed, nude beauty.

He sighed and handed Richard his clothes. "Son," he said, "I'm sorry to see God's perfect handiwork like you in a place like this when you could be of so much use in the world." Then again he stopped talking, only to say a second later as the guard gave Richard a command:

"If you need me any time, send for me. I'd like to help you fellows more. Somehow I believe if things were different——" But for the third time he went no further.

Richard's impulsive nature had understood the unspoken words, however, and his heart, so hungry for

sympathy, had gone out to the doctor with a passion of gratitude. Putting his hand out, he grasped the other's hand impulsively. "Thanks," he said, looking deep into his eyes before obeying, reluctantly, the guard's repeated command to march ahead of him and out of the room.

Dr. Deever shook his head sadly, muttering to himself: "Now that boy has possibilities. I don't care what he did! But in here!"—leaving his comment unfinished, only to go on thinking, "Physical and mental and moral injustice. Insult and abuse—filthy clothes—and a *Bible*!" These were the State's complete outfit for this boy's expected commencement of a life of *reform*! No possible hope of commendation or reward, no commuting of his sentence if his crime has been atoned for and his reformation accomplished before the allotted term shall have expired! What was the use of it all?" shaking his head in troubled protest at this enigma of "justice." Sitting silently, he listened to the boy's footsteps echo and re-echo as the guard guided him noisily down the foul concrete halls. For the thousandth time he asked himself whether the theories of his friend, Judge Sawyer, about prisons were not better and more reasonable than this actuality? Yet the people of his state considered Judge Sawyer a crank. Because he had once publicly criticised the actual operation of the prisons, he had lost his election to Congress. He would doubtless lose his judgeship too if he failed to take the warnings now so subtly appearing in the local press! Dr. Deever sighed. He must look Judge Sawyer up the next time he got a chance. He would like to hear more of his ideas about prisons and their possible influence for good if run along different lines. With a sense of real sympathy for the boy he turned back to his work—the examination of the next newcomer upon his list.

58 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

Soon Richard and his guard reached a sheet-iron door, and the guard, opening it, ordered Richard to mount the flight of steps that he could see but dimly. These steps led to a gallery, and, after locking and double locking the door behind them, the guard followed Richard up and on past rows of cells, until, reaching the one marked 13, he commanded him to halt in front of it. Stepping further down the gallery, the guard began working a heavy lever somewhere in the semi-darkness.

Richard peered in the direction of the noise which the squeaking lever made, hardly able to discern him, but saw that he was turning a crank. At that moment a large black iron bar that ran the length of the gallery, barring and locking as one the row of cells, began to lift slowly. Watching this in fascinated wonder, Richard saw it come to rest above the upper opening of the grated doors. The guard ceased his work and strode back to where Richard stood, and, applying a key, unlocked the double lock of cell No. 13. With a brutal gesture he said, as its door swung out: "Get in. And quick, too!"

Richard, obeying, entered, and found himself in a small stone-lined vault that was not over three feet wide. In the corridor opposite the door there was a window, too near the ceiling and too tiny to give other than a faint ray of light; but by its glimmer Richard could see a bundle of disheveled straw and ragged bedclothes in the corner of his cell, while nearby stood a tin basin and slop-bowl: the entire furnishings of his new home.

Without comment the guard slammed the grated door, which automatically locked itself; then he turned and again went down the gallery and adjusted the sinister bar.

With a numbness that seemed like slowly spreading

death itself, Richard saw this band of black descend, and then heard the man's footsteps approaching. Dimly, vaguely, as if in a half-aroused nightmare hour, he saw him pass his door! Then listened to the hollow sounds his feet made as he ran clumsily down the iron stairs and clanged to the heavy door at the bottom.

Richard was alone in the semi-darkness of imprisoned despair.

CHAPTER V

IT SEEMED to Richard as if he had been standing motionless for hours in the center of the cell. In reality it had been only a very few minutes since the thumping of the guard's steps down the gallery stairs had ended in the clang of the door at the bottom; but for Richard, alone in the first poignant agony of the realization of real imprisonment, time had lengthened to eternity.

Slowly he began to look about him, shuddering at what he saw—the pile of dirty straw, the basin, whose foulness made its presence felt even more plainly than seen, the high-set, tiny window out in the dim corridor, in size and position entirely inadequate, and the grated door. The dark, dank odors of the place arose thickly, sickeningly, seeming to Richard almost to throttle him in their persistence. Choking, he at last stumbled wildly forward until he stood face pressed against the barred door, gasping toward possible fresh air, and gazing up through the small window into "the tiny tent of blue that prisoners call the sky."

But those bars! They smote him; they degraded the clear of God's heavens and seemed to put their imprint upon his very being. It mattered not in what direction he might look, he could never escape them—nor the sight of his own stripe-clad body. He had thought his stay in the little Dunham jail bad enough; but this! Those bars, forever meeting his vision and possessing his body, scorching his flesh and searing his soul! They were black, black, black, with the blackness of despair! He was barred and striped from all humanity! A symbol of imprisonment, these

stripes stood for the shut-in years to come. They crowded down and around him, giving him a sense of physical pain. As one on closing his lids often sees an object in fiery outline after having stared at it against a strong light, so those stripes and bars were ever before him now. It mattered not in what direction he might turn his gaze, they were present, corrugating all objects with black bands of crime. They passed in through his vision and became real mental torture, pressing maddeningly against the back of his eyeballs! He caught himself wondering if his thoughts, once so free, could ever be so again with those bars to keep them prisoners. With his mind's eye he saw a picture of himself peering out like a criminal through those bars at the scenes of his beloved woods. He saw, in sections, the moon-kissed spray dashing upon the rocks. He felt its dampness upon his face—in stripes!

God, was he going mad! He must, he *must* think of something else! Must rid himself of the wildness that the place was steadily creating in him. He remembered having read somewhere that prisoners often went quite mad in their cells.

And then a calm, cold, argumentative mood possessed him, and he felt miles away from his actual self, standing aloof, watching the Richard he knew writhing in his petty suffering. The acute agony through which he had just been passing fell away, and he felt a bitter scorn of everything and everybody, of the whole world, enter his heart and turn it to steel. He shivered in spite of the stifling heat.

What if he had committed the crime of which he stood convicted? Had any man or aggregation of men the right to shut another man away from his birthright of God's sunshine and flowers? Away from the song of birds and sounds and sights of the woods?

62 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

These were nature's gifts to every one of her children; what right then had man to interfere? If a person's body was ill he was sent to a hospital or where its needs could be ministered to until that body was able to take up its duties again. That sick body was given every care and luxury, every thought and pampering, until it became normal. Why, then, should not the same thing be done with respect to the sick mind—for crime was but the symptom of a sick mind, he argued vehemently to himself. Why were criminals not "cured," not given a chance to become normal citizens again? While the laws were full of specious phrases indicating their purpose to reform, it was common knowledge that those who fell into its clutches were invariably relegated to the waste heap. From the moment of the judge's pronouncing of sentence they are legally dead and the absolute property of the State—mere chattels, with no rights whatever! And what was the occasion that brought them such a fate? In the last analysis it was simply this—their thoughts had been sick. But if that was so, why punish them further, instead of trying to cure the manifest illness? Was the answer simply "Man's inhumanity to Man?" Was there no other answer?

* * * * *

Leaving the grating of his door, he tramped the seven by three feet of his cell and tried to reason with himself. He had an insane, almost uncontrollable desire to dash himself against the grating; to battle with the bars until he was physically exhausted. He thought that such exhaustion would be an actual comfort. Yet in spite of this he held himself in check, and tried to bring his mind to dwell upon the pictures of his former freedom. Yes, that was it. He must think of the woods and streams and fields, of the

birds even now bursting with their summer gladness. The State might imprison his body, but his thoughts? Just because of physical degradation and imprisonment, should he allow his thoughts to be imprisoned also? Never! And with the conscious forming of this determination he became calmer.

Sitting down upon the straw pallet he shut his eyes and deliberately called into being every scene of the weeks before his imprisonment, and compelled them to pass mentally before him now. His body might be captive, but *he* would be only an imprisoned *freeman!* Clear of conscience and clean-hearted, no prison walls should succeed in making him other than that! Free thought is God given. It is the privilege of every one who will but claim it. It should be his!

Then suddenly there were no bars. They had faded away and through his closed eyelids Richard now looked out upon all that which he loved best in the world. The prison walls had receded and he found himself lying upon a mossy bank, the sparkling waters of the bay at his feet. Fields of daisies all about him lifted their faces toward the joyous sun. The sea-maidens of the bay sprang up and dashed their rainbow-tinted spray across his hair. The birds everywhere began to sing, and the flowers wafted him their perfumed kisses. The stench of the unaired, unwashed cell had entirely disappeared, and in its place there came to him only the familiar woodsy smell of delicate blossoms.

With the coming of their dreamlike perfume there had come also his mother's figure, glowing white. Quickly she drew near, and leaning toward him placed her hand upon his bowed head. He looked up to realize with a feeling of surprise that he was just a tiny bit of a boy, gazing once more into her adoring eyes. Taking him by the hand she said in her gentle voice:

"It's springtime. Come. I'll guide you through the coming years."

Happily then he followed her, and as they left the grim prison far behind, Richard's old-time joy awoke.

They passed out from the woods toward the arch of a rainbow against a dark cloud way over beyond the hills. "The rainbow is hope," his mother said, and, fascinated, Richard watched from his trotting place by her side and saw the rainbow divide into bright hues glowing with wondrous beauty. Her voice in his ear whispered: "These colors are the months through which you must pass on your life's journey."

Looking more closely Richard saw that he and his mother were entering a realm of palest green. "April," the voice said, and stooping his mother pushed back the dead leaves at his little feet and he saw the sturdy shoots of jack-in-the-pulpits. The springtime smell of the earth mingled with the delicious spiciness of azaleas. All about him he looked to see the yellow-bloomed sweet-leaved spice bushes gleaming in the April sunshine. Without warning a gentle shower began to bezewel them with tears, and his mother's voice again said: "Come."

Following her he passed into a suffusing light of lavender, and saw that they were treading softly upon a carpet of violets and baby ferns. Clumps of wild geranium smiled up at them, and over in a near-by swamp a glory of golden marigolds tossed their heads in sprightly dance. Appealing, delicious odors filled Richard's nostrils, and raising his eyes toward the sky he saw thousands of song-filled migrant birds flying in safety.

"Yes, it is May," his mother said in answer to his questioning look; and continuing to look upward Richard watched a great mass of quick flying bronzed grackles darken the sun, intent on reaching their nest-

ing home. Then as he looked, there came groups of shy thrushes; tanagers, gay colored as a sunset cloud, while following in quick succession resplendent orioles flew. But almost before Richard could take in all this May beauty he felt his mother's guiding hand leading him on. The lavender light changed into glowing pink. A sweet-throated house wren burst into joyous sound. Apple blossoms sifted down. He saw once more the bay and the big old osprey. Yet still his mother urged him on.

"'Tis June," she said, "but do not tarry, for mid-summer joy awaits us." And passing into a crimson light Richard saw blue flag lilies growing in the marsh and smelt their insistent odor mingling heavily with its bordering trees and shrubs in full maturity. Quickly they passed these and went on into the color of the month of broad masses, where the heliotrope-smell of eupatroid arose from vine-laden cornel bushes; and they neared the breeze-blown water. Through fields of purple and white asters, crowding golden-rod, she led him. The sweet bay-bush leaves, crushed under foot, perfumed the clear sparkling air; and singing joyously Richard entered the orchards of golden October and saw ahead of him the haze of the late fall's burning leaves. Now they hurried and soon saw the smoke which arose from the Yule-tide logs. At the edge of the forest soft-eyed deer gazed out at them, and Richard noticed little rabbit tracks in the gathering snow. The cold air brought to him the smell of spruce and pine. The Old Year, bent and gray, passed them, and the bright sparkling New Year stood beckoning in their path.

Richard stirred uneasily and opened his eyes, but quickly closing them, slept on. The high wind of March howled and roared, shaking the trees; and in a sudden feeling of terror he clung to his mother's skirts.

66 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

"Do not be afraid, my son," she said. "Sunshine—love—flowers, you know—"

But the roar and rattle of the wind drowned her voice, and sitting up Richard opened his eyes.

"Here you," he heard a gruff voice command, accompanied by the shaking of his cell door, "march out!" And looking up Richard saw that the bar had been lifted, and the jailer stood outside his cell. "It's grub time. Bring your slops and fall in line!" and dazedly obeying, he stepped from his cell into the hall and joined the line of black-striped, pail-laden prisoners who shambled and shuffled in single file through the corridor and down the iron stairs.

As they reached the court-yard and Richard whiffed the clean air once more, he involuntarily threw back his shoulders and with a deep inhalation lifted his face to the sky. No sooner had he done so, however, than he felt a sharp crack upon his back and a rough command to "keep his eyes where they belonged and march forward."

Thus the black-striped, lock-stepped file of shamed humanity went, each swinging his ill-smelling pail, until reaching the door at the far end of the court-yard they were commanded to enter.

Richard looked about him and saw a stone-lined room like all the corridors through which he had passed, but in the center of this there was a sewage disposal vat with running water. Past the vat the line of men marched, each man stopping by command only long enough to dump his pail, rinse it slightly, and go on down the room and out into another. On entering this other room Richard with all the rest was commanded to set his pail down, fall into a column of two, and enter still a third room, this time the mess hall.

With a feeling of nausea that had been steadily growing since the terrible march began, Richard again

started to obey, but was stopped by the command of a man at the door. Looking up he recognized the bullying face of the prison's principal keeper who had questioned him that morning.

"Here you," the keeper said, stopping the whole line in order to reprimand Richard. "Place your right hand on your cap and your left on your breast when you see *me*—like the others do! I ain't one to be treated with disrespect. You hear?"

Richard, a grim sarcastic smile twisting his scornful lips, did as he was bid, but not before the keeper had caught the expression and exclaimed to himself: "That kid's spirit has got to be broke!" and he let his cruel eyes follow the boy, gloating over the knowledge that he had him in his power. Thus in his case it was as it always will be—whenever a human being lacking in spirituality is given absolute authority over another, he loses all sense of proportion and becomes a bullying brute!

Into the mess hall, then, the men marched and took their places in front of a long shelf on which there was already spread a meal consisting of dirty bowls full of luke-warm gruel, cups filled with a dark odorous liquid, supposedly coffee, and hunks of sour bread.

At a given word of command they all seated themselves at this repast, and amid enforced and utter silence, save only for the clicking and clacking of spoons against the ware, tried to eat what was before them. But Richard had been brought up in the wholesomeness of true New England cleanliness; so, though he was ravenously hungry from his journey, he could not for the life of him touch the food before him now, but instead sat watching the army of flies as they went busily about their floating, crawling, foot-disentangling task of making it even more loathsome!

Richard saw with a feeling of disgust that many of

68 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

the men about him were gulping and devouring the food in spite of this; yet he noticed also that there were many others like himself who left their portions untouched. With a pang he felt, almost for the first time in his life, true sympathy and pity for these dregs of humanity, and it made him square his jaw with a bitter determination to help them if he could. In his former life of respectability and freedom he had been inclined to look on most men of misfortune he had known as of an inferior order. By nature he was an autocrat—a being apart; and so scornful had he always felt of his fellow man's inability to grasp happiness, that his sympathies were seldom aroused except by injustice or some show of physical cruelty. He had believed that only beings who wilfully failed to live as nature dictates need be really unhappy, and in consequence had hated and scorned what he considered the petty ways and narrow-mindedness of the majority of Dunham's citizens. He had believed that almost all of the suffering in that little village was brought on by the deliberate turning away from nature's pure teachings. He had felt, as he had many times expressed it, that people in general made prisoners of *themselves* by imprisoning their own free thoughts. Yet now he realized as he looked about him at the lined faces of his fellow-prisoners that their suffering was more than that. With this new realization there swept over him a great sympathy, paternal in its comprehensiveness, for the whole of mankind. He longed as he had never longed before to help his fellow-creatures. Perhaps after all he had been sent to this prison for that very purpose. Perhaps his life here could count for more than it could in any of his day dreams of greatness. Yet even in the midst of this inspiration he felt his old-time anger arise against the State and its authority, rise in a fury equal to that

which had made him blaze forth in defense of the scarleted girl and imbecile children the day before in court.

In the revealing light of understanding and growing sympathy he began to see the men about him in a totally different way, yet in true keeping with his impulsive character emotionalism seized upon him and made him exaggerate even their plight. He swore to himself some day to get even with the world which had treated him and them so unmercifully! His mother seemed to draw near him, to warn him against this bitterness; but unheeding her sweeter influence he felt himself growing hot with increasing anger at the thought of the brutal degradation to which the State had subjected them—the utter uselessness and foolishness of treating these men only as criminals when they were still men. Well, one thing was certain, they could imprison his body, but as to his mind, his personality—he would just show them!

Turning he addressed the man seated by his side, although he knew perfectly well that such a thing was against the rules.

"My name's Dennison," he said, in a pleasant introductory tone. "And yours?"

But before his cowed neighbor could answer, had he dared to do so, a guard strode up and tapped Richard on the back.

"No gassing, young man! Silence is the word here. Prisoners ain't allowed to talk to each other. Against the rules!"

With a defiant lift of the chin that was barely perceptible Richard made another remark to the man at his side. The guard's stick came down less gently this time, and he said harshly: "Cut that out, you young fool! You've made enough trouble for one day. Shut up, I tell you, and can your grub!" But utterly

70 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

oblivious even of the guard's presence the defiant boy went on talking, again addressing a remark to his neighbor.

A fury that perhaps would have been excusable in a criminal, in the accepted sense of the word, possessed the guard, and his heavy hand coming down upon the boy's shoulders, with an oath, he wrenched him roughly, stool and all, from the table, dragging him sharply to his feet.

"Damn you!" he said furiously through clenched teeth. "Obey me, or you go to the 'rot-pit'!" and he rapped Richard's knuckles with his heavy stick.

The boy flinched slightly at the sharp crack, but tossing his head exclaimed: "I don't give *that*," snapping his fingers, "for your beastly rules! No human being on earth has a right to make rules that imprison other human beings' thoughts as well as their bodies. My body is your prisoner because it can't help itself. You've imprisoned it by mere brute force; but no power can, or will, enable you to imprison my thoughts or the expression of them—and you may just as well understand that now!"

He had hardly finished his sentence, however, before the loaded stick descended again, and for the second time that day Richard dropped to the floor.

A rush followed like that of wild animals uncaged; for every prisoner with a spark of manhood left in him rose from the table at the onslaught and, rushing forward, they surrounded the guard and his unconscious charge. It was not the first time such a scene had been enacted in that prison among those long-suffering silenced men. Though each of them now participating knew it meant days of added personal misery and deprivation, their innate love of humanity, the spark of divine love that redeems the world, the spirit of Christ suffering for others that is deep in the heart of

every one of us, responded to the call of a fellow-creature in distress, and they immediately formed to mob the guard who had gone too far in his habitual cruelty! Fists flew thick and fast, loaded sticks descended, and a bedlam of wild oaths broke out as guards and prisoners alike fought out the world-old quarrel of brutal authority versus outraged manhood. Save for the uniforms and superiority of their weapons no onlooker could have told the "righteous" from the "unrighteous."

Finally the riot was quelled. Might had again conquered right, and the loaded stick and pistol butts of the guards had meant the survival of their fitness; while those prisoners big and brave enough to have come to their fellow man's rescue, in spite of all the dwarfing influence that governmental stupidity had brought to bear upon them, were dragged from the room to be punished for the very act that proved their divinity of soul.

Quickly the guards took Richard down to an underground cell at the extreme end of the back wing of the prison. Here the death chambers were located, where "Society's murderers were, in turn, murdered by Society." This wing was a low structure, the oldest part of the prison, and just back of it, within a few feet, the prison's rear and outer wall ran.

To "the rot-pit" in this old wing a prisoner proving contumacious to rules was sent to "rot" until those high up in authority thought his punishment had been sufficient—or remembered his existence long enough to release him, just as the case might be. As there was no specific term set by constituted authority for any offense, the viewpoint taken was that the offender had better be kept there until his spirit was broken. Many a prisoner had died or gone mad in these dungeons where Death stalked unrestrained in the name

72 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

of Justice, without the knowledge or thought of the warden. The offense committed by occupants of these "rot-pits" oftentimes was so trifling as to be deserving of little if any punishment, even in the eyes of the keeper. Yet, as in Richard's case, the personal prejudice or momentary bad temper of the guard who happened to be in authority, and against whom the offense was directed, be it real or fancied, entered so largely into the degree of punishment inflicted, that the prison's hirelings could send a prisoner down for practically any offense. So now it was that Richard, sore and bruised, awoke and stood up to find himself in a place the stifling dark horror of which he could scarcely have conceived. Instead of the stone-lined chambers of the upper tiers where daylight could enter through grated door and window, the cell in which he now found himself was totally unlighted and practically unventilated. The door leading from it to the corridor was of solid sheet iron with only a few tiny air holes along its upper and lower edges; while there was a series of three small holes, no bigger than tea-cups, in the cell's end wall.

Through these at noon on a bright day scant rays of light percolated, but did not in any way light up the underground cell, for the holes, being on a level with the surface of the earth outside, opened out close to the wall surrounding the prison. There were no accommodations for washing face or hands. The one and only article supplied was an unemptied slop pail over in one corner. In the door there was a small grated slide like a ticket-office window with a shelf beneath it, through and on to which the prisoner's daily rations were thrust by the guard outside. Upon this there now stood a tiny cup of water which Richard was told must last him twenty-four hours. The floor was of stone flagging and the walls were unbroken

cement. Richard could see none of this, however, in the darkness that prevailed.

Painstakingly he felt his way about the foul smelling place, thinking to find a pallet bed of straw on which to lie down and allay the terrible dizzy sickness which was fast overpowering him. His long, fine-fingered hands fumbled up and down the walls, hunting; and putting first one and then the other of his feet in front of him, he shufflingly felt around the edge of the floor. All was blank and vacant so far as he could tell, and he concluded the cell must be entirely unfurnished.

With a feeling of increasing dismay, for he was too weak by now for anger, he went groping on, believing the place to be larger than he had at first thought. It was so dark that he could not tell whether it was vast or small, the air so bad that though he seemed to be stumbling on indefinitely, in reality he had scarcely moved from the door through which the guard had pushed him, but had been dazedly going over the same space of floor and wall.

Finally, however, his foot struck something soft, and eagerly falling down upon his knees he felt out to what he thought must surely be the pile of straw heaped in the corner. Then in dizzy weakness he flung himself forward gratefully, and lay for several moments in an exhausted heap, gasping for breath.

He had not lain there very long when his anger began to awaken. His indomitable health and spirits were too great to be long subdued by the cruelty of that dark desolation; so, letting this feeling surge through him uncontrolled, he found himself stimulated and revived.

He sat up and noticed with surprise that his hands were covered with grit, and that the elevation on which he lay did not yield to his weight. He did not feel

74 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

straw nor any other substance that he could actually grasp between his fingers. As he slowly ran his hands over its surface a thought, compelling and wonderful in its possibilities, shot through his mind. Trembling with excitement he dug down and grasped a handful of the stuff and stumbled toward the faintly lighted holes of the cell wall. They were high up near the ceiling and gave no light, yet as he held his hand close up to his eyes he imagined he could see what he held.

It must be—he felt sure it must be—earth!

He put it to his nose; but so deadened had his sense of smell become during his short stay in the foul cell that he could distinguish no odor whatsoever. Then he took a pinch of it and put it between his teeth. Yes, it was gritty—it did not dissolve—it *was* earth!

“Mother,” he murmured brokenly, “help me find the loose paving. I know it must be there!” and very laboriously, on hands and knees, he went over the floor, feeling for every crevice. The suspense and hope it aroused in him caused him acute suffering, yet his heart sang within him, for he felt that the way to freedom was surely very near. But this hope was suddenly frozen with horror; for from a cell just down the corridor there came to his ears the cry of physical agony, accompanied by the unmistakable sounds of flogging. Nearer still, and more distinct, other cries arose, as another prisoner, stripped to the skin, was chained and a stream of water of enormous pressure played upon him until, black and blue from head to foot, his tormentors finally so directed it that his cries died away in unconsciousness.

Then from the cell next to his the crazed prayers and groans of one soon to be freed—forever—but not by his Maker’s divine hands, completed the fiendish clamor.

CHAPTER VI.

ALTHOUGH weeks had passed, and Richard had spent most of his time patiently groping for a loosened stone in the floor of his cell, he had as yet been unable to discover it. Many times during those weeks hope had sprung up in him when he found a crevice deeper than usual; but always it had as quickly died, for it was soon apparent that the adjoining stones were immovable without leverage, and could not be raised with his hands alone.

At such times of kindling hope, invariably followed by the depression of bitter disappointment, the boy would throw himself down upon the dirt mound back of his door and lie for hours, too exhausted and discouraged to move. But always he let his mind go over and over the puzzle of the mound's presence in the dungeon and its suggestion of possible escape. It could mean but one thing—he felt sure of that. Some former occupant, somehow, somewhere, had been able to lift a flag and tunnel beneath the cell's stone-paved floor, piling the dirt from the excavation where Richard had found it. That this prisoner had not completed the tunnel or escaped through it, Richard felt equally certain, for had he done so the guards would have searched the cell and in so doing discovered the mound of earth and replaced it, making the floor secure. Richard felt positive that no such search had taken place, and knew that in the cell's semi-blackness such guards as might have seen, or felt, its outline in sweeping—if they ever did such a thing—had thought the mound only the straw and rag heap that served throughout the ill-kept prison as the prisoners' beds.

76 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

Lying on the dirt heap Richard thought more and more constantly of the other man who had doubtless suffered just as he was now suffering. His imagination soon pictured him so vividly that he became for Richard almost a living, breathing personality, a personality with whom he could talk and think with perfect understanding, a real companion in the lonely place.

But where was he? Why had he not finished the work so cleverly begun? Had he died before that was possible—or gone mad for lack of air, as Richard oftentimes felt he himself must do? Or had his fate been that of the four others Richard had heard praying in the death-chamber?

Eight weeks of close confinement had begun to tell on him terribly. Often he found it almost impossible to rise and go forward at the jailer's daily command to receive his portion of bread and water when it was passed in through the slide of his door. Yet he knew that his whole future, the very continuance of life itself, depended absolutely upon his mind's ability to drive his body into action. He would not give in to the growing lassitude that seemed sapping his strength and will power!

Giving free rein to his anger, he would fairly scourge himself into a fury of exertion, an exertion which seemed to bring on temporarily increased mental and moral fitness, but which ultimately left him in a more depleted and exhausted state than before. A man of less courage and endurance, less determination not to die either in spirits or body, would have succumbed in the first few weeks of this unventilated, unlighted existence; but Richard, confident that he could find freedom did he but continue to try, forced himself to live and keep his sanity in spite of the brutal short-sightedness of his native State. He began

to see freedom only as an opportunity for the exercise of a possible and speedy vengeance toward that State; for during the long drawn out succession of black hour upon black hour, week upon week, in which he had naught else to do, the determination that had been conceived in him during his first day in prison grew into a great and strong maturity. He would have his revenge! Born as he was with a master mind that under proper conditions could have developed into a splendid constructive force, Law and Justice, in the blindness of their much advertised virtue, were turning this force into a destructiveness that grew daily in strength, stimulating Richard to persevere in his search for the movable paving stone.

Day and night he worked on, except when his mind refused to drive his body further. At such times of enforced rest he would lie upon his earth couch and, giving up the hunting, groping, determined struggle for possible means of freedom, would let his thoughts wander from the prison and his life there, out into the open fields of flowers, until real sleep would come to him. His mother's gentle spirit comforted and caressed his weary body, and even after awakening he would feel that old irresponsible happiness surge through him, resuscitating his whole being.

One day at noon, after just such a reviving experience, his slice of bread and tin of water balanced upon his legs, he heard a faint scrambling back of him near the wall, and presently felt a sharp gnawing of tiny teeth upon the toe of his heavy boot.

With a start of surprise, but well controlled, he leaned cautiously forward and peered through the gloom, hoping to discern the agent of attack. The three holes high up in the wall of his dungeon dimly illuminated small disks at the base of the opposite wall, and their pale light enabled him to see, faintly sil-

78 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

houetted against one of them, the erect figure of a young rat alert upon its haunches. It was the first sign of animal life Richard had seen since he left the train on that fatal day of his incarceration, and a feeling of keen pleasure passed through him at the sight of the commonly despised little vermin. It gave him a feeling of being nearer the outside world and his beloved creatures of the wild. His pulses quickened as with the wariness of a woodsman he held his legs perfectly still and reaching forward placed a bit of his bread on his knee. Having accomplished this without frightening his visitor, he leaned slowly back again and watched the little thing with interest.

At the approached smell of food the rat ceased the gnawing of Richard's boot, and dropping its front paws to the floor, crouched there, watchfully looking about. Presently, satisfied that everything was safe, it began to scramble slowly up his stripe-clad leg, stopping every now and then to listen. The bread was very tempting, the risk seemed small, and so dropping to its all-four again, it came on, and at last having attained the aspired goal, seized the bread and with a spasm of fear that overtakes the timidly courageous, scampered in a panic back into the darkness of the cell.

The whole episode had been one of pleasure to the nature-loving boy, and from that day forward he determined to win the circumspect little creature's confidence, for he felt sure that having once found the way it would come again. Even sour bread and a limited supply of water becomes palatable, even desirable, when voluntarily shared with another; and so each day Richard set aside a portion of his meager fare for his greedy guest.

So great is the influence of human kindness over those creatures lower down in the scale of life that soon Richard had entirely won the small animal, and

becoming more and more tame it was not long before it came regularly to him at his meal time. He speeded many of his darkest hours by thinking of its companionship and planning for its further taming. By degrees he began playfully to secrete bits of bread about his prison clothing, or to hide a morsel under a bit of earth placed within the limits of the dim rays of light, thoroughly amused at the cleverness and determination of his queer pet who always found these prizes and, with only a saucy whisp of its tail for a "thank you," would be off through the impenetrable darkness before he could see where it had gone.

Watching one day for its accustomed arrival at noon, Richard was surprised to see the little thing appear against the lighter gloom of one of the wall's three disks, in a totally unfamiliar outline. It looked to him as if it might be carrying something in its mouth, that is as nearly as he could make out in the dimness of his cell. As it came scrambling up his leg to his knee, he was impressed by the tenseness of its whole small body and the eagerness with which it came. His hand was resting as usual, palm up, upon his legs, the daily portion of bread lying in it; and when the rat reached it he was astonished to feel that instead of taking the bread the little creature laid something in his hand and then, rearing itself on its haunches, gave a faint, harsh squeak!

His fingers involuntarily closed over the object, and the blood pounded to his temples as he found it to be soft and warm and living; a feebly wriggling little life! The young mother had brought him her baby! She sat there unafraid and trusting while he held it in his own powerful grasp. To the lonely boy in his man-imposed isolation, this trustful act of the much scorned "beastie" was as balm to the raw wounds of his heart, aggravated by the many weeks of his grow-

80 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

ing bitterness toward the world. He who had thought himself friendless, and knew himself to be disowned by his fellow man, shut up by him in a place fit only for this little creature born and bred in darkness, had gained the entire trust and confidence of that which man called vile.

Presently opening his fingers he let the little mother take her baby and go scampering off the way she had come.

For a while he sat still, musing on the pleasurable significance of this last experience. Then he got up and started to tramp the cell as he had not had the strength to do for many days; but quickly becoming dizzy sat down again upon the dirt mound, limply dropping his hands to his sides. To his surprise the fingers of his left hand slipped into a hole, and at that moment he felt the squirming of something soft, and then a sharp pain. Drawing his hand out, he discovered his forefinger had been bitten, and putting it to his lips to draw the place, he peered down and dimly saw the rat come scurrying up to his knees again, entirely unconscious of what she had just done. In her eagerness to reach the food which she had previously been unable to carry away because of her proud burden, she had attacked the obstacle in her path, not knowing it to be any part of her human friend, and doubtless feeling quite triumphant now that she had overcome it so easily.

"You funny little fellow!" Richard said aloud, forgetting the pain in his finger at her greedy presence, yet marveling at the queer altered tones of his own voice, unused so long. "It's strange I've never happened to come across your home before," and he held out the bread crumbs toward her, when suddenly a startling possibility flashed through him. She took the bread and scampered away, while Richard, forget-

ting everything save the new hope the discovery of her hole had given him, began to dig into the dirt mound with both hands.

Frantically he flung the damp earth away until he reached the stone-flagged floor underneath. It had never before occurred to him in his search for the loose stone in which he so firmly believed, to look *under* the mound. But now as he blindly felt about the uneven flagging he reasoned that his little pet's tunnel doubtless had connection with that tunnel of his dreams, and soon his fingers had reached and grasped a small hard object, and he knew by the feel of it that it must be a crude knife stuck in the crevice of a flag.

Pressing down upon this, he felt the stone raise itself slightly—and then it flew suddenly up and out! Thrown off his balance by the violent exertion, Richard plunged upon his face and felt his arm go down into the opening! Too overcome in his weakness to do otherwise, he lay there, his arm dangling into unseen freedom, while tears of exhaustion coursed down his cheeks.

Presently he lifted his face, and leaning forward over the brink of the hole swung his arm around trying to gauge its size and depth. It seemed very small. He could easily touch the sides, everywhere; and with a tightening of his throat he suddenly doubted whether it was wide enough to allow for his shoulders. If only the cell were lighter so that he could see! The wish for light had no sooner formed in his mind, however, than a gratitude for the darkness came to countermand it; for he realized that in the protection of the dark alone lay his ability to accomplish an escape.

Slowly he stood up, and then, squatting, rested his hands on the stones on either side of the opening and lowered himself into the hole. It was wide enough for his shoulders; but greatly to his disappointment he

82 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

found that his feet almost immediately touched bottom and that it was no deeper than his waist line—apparently only the beginning of a tunnel. For a moment his courage deserted him at this disappointment. His hopes had builded so high! Quickly, however, he was ashamed that he should have been so ungrateful even momentarily for this chance of freedom.

After all the tunnel was started. Also he had found his fellow sufferer's implement—the knife—with which he had accomplished this much toward gaining the outer world. It behooved him to complete the job, that was all. His heart suddenly went out with understanding sympathy to that other one who through death, or some other cause, was unable to benefit by Richard's work as Richard was even now about to benefit by his. If only he could share the good luck with him or some one else—some of those other silenced men he had seen in the mess hall; men who were victims of the repression of all natural instincts, peons of brutality, whom the State was crushing and deforming. He longed to help them. Again there came over him the resolution to obtain revenge for his and their wrongs, once he was out and free to do as he chose. Nothing should stop him!

Climbing from the hole again he felt for the knife. Confound the darkness! It delayed him so! He could not find it! But—here it was! He grasped its handle firmly as it stuck up in the loose earth, and then groaned with sudden apprehension lest he lose it again—by breaking it. If he did that, his opportunity would be lost also. He knew he could never dig with his bare hands, it mattered not how willing they might be. Already they were sore and bleeding, the nails torn and dragging from digging as much as he had. A panic seized him. How could he ensure the knife's safety? At the thought of losing the use of it

and what its loss would mean to him he felt possessed with the old desire to scream—to go mad, and with all his might he had to fight it down and gain reasoning self control.

"I'm getting to be a coward!" he exclaimed in disgust at his fear. Then clinching his teeth he muttered through them: "But I shall win! No power on earth can stop me!" and dropping into the hole again he crouched down on his heels preparatory to digging where the other man had left off. As he took this position he swayed slightly and put one hand out to steady himself. Much to his amazement, instead of his hand touching the hole's side as he had thought it would, it went out into a black vastness. Cautiously he remained squatting where he was, his back braced; and putting his other hand forward tried to feel about. It, too, extended into space. Then lifting both arms he tried to gauge the void in front of him, only to feel his hands suddenly come in contact with the hardened earth above them. Then he understood.

The former occupant of his cell, his unwitting partner in the plan for escape, had at first dug straight down until he gained a foot hold, after which he had branched out on a level with the bottom of the hole, digging head first.

With an effort Richard eagerly doubled himself up into a smaller crouch and, ducking, stuck his head into the blackness after his groping hands. At this, unbalancing himself completely, he fell forward and lay straight down upon his face. This meant that the tunnel was of a fairly good length, and he began to wriggle and worm his way through it. His heart beat wildly as he crawled on, half suffocated with hope! It seemed to him that he must have crawled quite a distance, there was so little air; and the blood pounded in his head so hard that he would often have

84 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

to lie quiet trying to control it and the twitching of his weakened limbs. At times he felt he would die like a rat in a trap long before he could reach the end; for, unlike that little creature, man is not so well able to overcome the obstacles of darkness and suffocation. Yet still he worked his way forward, hoping each moment to see daylight ahead.

After what seemed to him to be hours of such painful progress, he came to something hard and unyielding, and with a sinking of his courage he concluded that he had simply traversed the length under his own cell and was now up against the deep sunk foundation wall of the prison. Was this what had stopped the other man in his hardly fought road toward freedom? Had he found it impossible to penetrate this barrier? Perhaps he, too, would have to turn back to the vile cell, and give the whole plan up. But at the thought of this his anger and determination blazed. He would *not* give up! Bit by bit, inch by inch, if it took him the whole ten years of his sentence, he would pick a way through that wall! Then with dampening discouragement there came the remembrance of the fact that there was still another wall! He had seen it through the air holes of his cell. The one he was up against now belonged to the building itself doubtless; but the other, and probably stronger one, surrounded the entire prison. In the face of such great obstacles should he, after all, try for freedom?

He knew he should, even before he had asked himself the question. His was a nature that once driven into revolt quickly gained almost superhuman strength of purpose, and under no circumstances could that purpose be thwarted. But though he determined that he would succeed in spite of everything, he found that he was now too exhausted even to commence the further work of his escape. So regretfully working his way

back through the narrow passage, he once more stood up upon the floor of his cell.

He had barely succeeded in replacing the stone and packing the dirt back upon it, first marking it with a strip torn from his shirt, when he heard a series of clicks at his sheet-iron door, and looking up saw that it had been swung back and that the figure of a guard stood within his cell silhouetted against the grayness of the corridor beyond.

"Guess you've rotted long enough," the guard's voice said as he flashed an electric flash-light; and striding forward he laid his hands on Richard's shoulders. "I've got orders to remove you to your former cell." Then he volunteered with a patronizing air: "Your spirit got broke quicker than some. But no monkey business with *me*, like what you done with the guard who put you here. Understand?" And taking the dazed boy by the arm he led him into the hall and slammed the door. "Forward, march!" he commanded. "Go ahead!"

At the guard's command Richard's feet mechanically carried him up to cell No. 13, on the upper tier of the newer part of the prison. He was too dazed at his sudden release from the dark dungeon, conscious that it was the last thing in the world that he had wished, to be able to think; and as the guard lifted the long iron bar and Richard entered his first cell again, the lightness of this windowed place, with its grated door, compared with that other in which he had been so many weeks, seemed to his eyes a dreadful flood of smiting glare! He tried to look up into the tiny tent of blue, black barred, that he could see from the window, but it caused him acute pain; and putting his hands over his smarting eyes he staggered back and threw himself upon his rags and straw.

So this was the end of his dream of freedom!

86 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

This cell, one degree removed in loathsomeness from the other! Somehow it had never occurred to him that he would be released from the dungeon and reimprisoned in the place from which escape was impossible. Why had they brought him back? Why had he not resisted the guard? Refused to leave the dungeon? Probably if he had shown fight he would have been left there. But now—.

Then the guard's explanatory words returned to him, and he exclaimed aloud in his husky new voice: "By George, if they think that my spirit is broken, I'll just show them!" and his own words reacting upon his mind, he realized he had hit upon an idea which might, if properly carried out, give him another chance. It was worth trying anyhow. If in the prison system, under which he was now compelled to live, there was no reward for virtue, but quick and sure punishment for breaking of rules, then it behooved him to profit by that system if he could. He was not the first prisoner in the crime-breeding place to so decide. Man shows his best side when rewarded, and the repression of all reward or commendation has helped to make prisons the busy hives they are, turning out apt pupils fitted for a cunning life of crime. Richard had served only a very short part of his sentence, but that lesson, bred in the long weeks of darkness, had been unconsciously learned by him. With a feeling of pride in his astuteness, he now realized it had not been learned in vain. Having always wanted to be like his mother, he had early in life persuaded himself that he had inherited her nature alone; and so now he did not in the least perceive that like inheritance of his father's nature was getting the better of him.

Marshaling every ounce of his fast failing strength Richard rose from the straw on which he had thrown himself and went toward the grated door. Peering

through it he could see the guard who had reinstated him stop, presumably to speak to a prisoner at the far end of the corridor. Raising his voice Richard began to shout hoarsely, calling out maledictions upon the guard's head in the most excited manner he could muster.

With a scowling glare of surprise the guard whirled around and strode back toward the noise.

Richard, encouraged and becoming really excited at the unaccustomed sound of his own unrestrained voice, let his excitement leap all bounds; and screaming and cursing in a manner he would not have believed possible, threw himself against the cell door, shaking and pounding it with his fury-crazed fists. Deep down in his inner consciousness he knew he was overstepping the mark he himself had set for this campaign for one more chance at freedom; that it was probably a mistake for him to let himself loose as he was doing. Instead of accomplishing what he had planned that it should accomplish, this unrestrained anger and excitement might easily turn him into the crazed being that he had often feared he might become. Yet fairly reveling in the relief of his pent-up nervousness and emotion, he did not care; and as the guard approached —then ran past his cell—his manner became crazier than ever.

“Here, damn you, choke that infernal racket!” the guard commanded, and turning the crank that controlled the corridor-long bar he lifted it and came running back to Richard's cell.

By now his screams had brought other jailers running too. Half starved white faces, with maddened eyes, appeared at the grated doors all up and down the corridor in sympathetic fear for a foolhardy mate with temerity enough to break the rules! Strange as it may seem, there exists among prisoners a vigorous

88 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

feeling of loyalty, a genuine passion of sympathy and co-operation that, could it be turned to account, must necessarily be a potent force for good; and so now every convict on that gallery gave instant sympathy and support to the hysterical boy by joining in the uproar.

Richard's screams grew louder than ever, and his words no longer meant much to his own excited ears as, unlocking the cell, the combined body of guards made a rush for him.

"What do you mean by this bug-house performance?" the guard he had reviled asked, while the other burly men pinned his arms and legs in brutal grasps. "Don't you know you'll go to the 'rot-pit' again if you keep this up? Shut your fool mouth!" and he cuffed Richard roughly across the lips until they ran blood.

With the man's words and blow Richard's half-forgotten determination, which had been lost in the haziness of his hysteria-clouded brain, stood out plainly once more.

"You won't put me back there! I'll kill you before I go back to that vile place! I'll kill you, I say!"

But taking Richard from the cell three of the men began beating him; and then half pushing, half dragging him along the corridor, shoved him down the stairs and carried him through the hallways, resounding with his mad screams, back to the underground wing of the death cells. Hurrying him through this wing they reached a part of the prison he had not seen before, and unlocking a heavy door threw him into a totally unlighted dungeon.

As he felt its atmosphere and the wave of intense dry heat that smote him in the face, he gasped for breath; then suddenly losing his self control, he cried out for mercy, begging the guards not to put him there. His fear now was entirely genuine; but so

great was his suffering that he could say but little, and his inarticulate words were met only by brutal laughter from the guards who watched him as he writhed in agony upon the heated floor. The place was a diabolical conception of a master fiend, for walls and floor alike were made hot to a degree only short of actual burning, and to the boy's sensitive body, accustomed to the cold dampness of his underground cell, this heat was torture. Stepping forward with an obscene epithet, another guard added just one more degree of torture by throwing a can of red pepper in Richard's face and hair.

"Reckon that ought to sweat his spunk out a little bit!" he volunteered, while still another called out to him: "So you don't like the hell hole, Sonny! Well, you better get used to it this side of judgment!"

For several moments more Richard was left to suffer, his fiendish tormentors seeming to enjoy the sight. Finally, however, the jailer in direct charge of him, feeling that he had probably stood as much as he could, dragged him from the place and carried him further down the hallway to another cell, in which there was a pool of foul-smelling water. Into this, with jocose remarks about extinguishing "hell's fire", Richard was plunged to the neck; and then picking up a hose made for the purpose, they played it down his throat, giving him the sensation of drowning, making him gag and choke and finally vomit as the water got down into his intestines, causing him violent cramping.

The water in which he stood was icy cold, and though somewhat reviving in its immediate effect upon him, nevertheless chilled him to the marrow. The State, however, always thoughtful and protective of its wards, even though they be of the "criminal class," had provided that "No prisoner

should be punished by death save those sentenced to hang by their necks until they were dead;" and so Richard's law-abiding guards, being self-respecting citizens of this free land of ours, did not overstep the mark, but soon dragged Richard from this torment, and stripping off his clothing took him into a third cell. The law here too, intervened to save his life; for it is unlawful to "whip a man on his bare skin." Tying him to a whipping post and covering him therefore with rags soaked in brine and wet with alcohol, they beat him mercilessly; and then, replacing his wet and filthy clothing, which stuck to his lacerated back, they took him, now more dead than alive, to another cell. Here they adjusted the iron head cage made to keep prisoners from assuming any possible posture of rest, and roughly throwing him in, slammed the door and left him.

* * * * * *

After many hours Richard roused himself and tried to peer about him. Where was he? Was this the cell in which he wished to be? Had the deliberate endurance of all this physical pain served his purpose?

For the life of him he could not make up his mind to crawl forward to discover whether the indistinct object in the corner was a dirt mound, though he knew that would tell him; but lay in a bruised heap longing, yet not daring, to know his whereabouts.

CHAPTER VII

TIME passed, during which Richard, sustained by the success of the ruse which had returned him to his tunnel, was many times taken from his cell, tormented, and then cast back again; but now the last bit of stone fell into his hands from the opening which he had made in the outer prison wall, and exclaiming under his breath the boy lay still for a moment in the narrow confines of the passage, a wan smile lighting up his drawn face.

For eight months he had been digging during the nights and "rotting" in his dungeon during the day; now the work was completed, both walls pierced, and there remained only the final stroke that would break the surface of the ground outside and set him free! He dared not give this needed stroke for many hours to come, however, for night was in travail and morning being born. He knew this in spite of his presence in the black tunnel, just as a blind person knows such things. In all the months of his imprisonment every outside sound, the arrival and departure of daily trains, the sound of prison gongs, the tramp-tramp of guards and prisoners alike, had come to mean certain hours to him; and thus by sound he had learned to estimate time almost exactly. His task was finished! Only a few hours' wait now, and he would be free!

Slowly he retraced the distance of the tunnel, working his way carefully, and entered his prison cell again, once more hiding the entrance by means of the loose dirt mound.

During the interminable day that followed, marked for him only by the lighting of the three holes in his wall and three meals of bread and water, he waged a constant battle with his impatience. A sickness of

92 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

apprehension surged over him again and again at every approach of the guards, and at such times he felt an almost overwhelming conviction that they would discover his plot, or that something else would happen to prevent the full success of his plans for escape. He longed for the coming of night, and the last desperate try for freedom that it would bring, irritably cursing the long-continued hours of daylight as they dragged by.

His waiting was at an end at last, however, for the night gong had sounded, sweet music to his keenly pricked ears, and he knew it would be safe to go ahead with his final effort.

Cautiously worming his way once more through the tunnel, he reached the place where he had made up his mind it would be wise to break through to the surface of the earth. All day long his heart had bounded to the thought of that final stroke; but suddenly now, as he reached the spot, a panic seized him and he timidously crouched in the airless hole, shivering with dread and apprehension. He remembered with the fright of a lost child that he did not know at all how the ground lay outside, nor did he know whether the prison guards kept watch. Even on his emergence he would be unable to know immediately what kind of a world he had stepped into, whether forest or plain. Besides, if he succeeded, his status would be that of an escaped convict, and even though he were never reapprehended, all the rest of his life there would hang over his head the sword of Damocles—the inevitable danger of reimprisonment, and the penalty meted out to those who had dared defy the prison's power. He knew that the punishment for breaking jail was the doubling of the sentence. He knew that the law would take any measures, even to shooting to kill, to protect Society against his escape. His panic increased at these

thoughts, and he lay trembling with fear which wrought instant cowardice in him, seeming to sap all manhood from his mal-nourished body, and making him feel unable to face so problematic a future as he saw must be his. The indomitable will so characteristic of him seemed to have turned to the weakness of milk and water, and a loathing of himself came to increase his suffering.

Perhaps, after all, he thought bitterly, the place *had* broken his spirit as the guards had predicted. Perhaps the bars had left their black-striped imprint upon his consciousness for all time, creating a force of fear in him that was destined to imprison his courage and will. Certainly in his present state of mind, staying where he was seemed almost preferable to the risk and aftermath of escape. He acknowledged this mental attitude with self-wonder. Was this the brave spirit which he had always supposed was his?

There came back to him hatred of the cowardice which in his father he had so despised, and recalling the personality of the self-righteous man who had so bullied and harassed his childhood, his determination to be as unlike him as possible blazed in his soul and spurred his lagging strength. As was characteristic, anger filled him at the idea that he could be like one he considered so despicable, and he made up his mind to face his future without further question. To be like his father, whose bad side alone his son had always seen, seemed to him to be the worst possible fate that could befall him. He failed to see that many other traits of this forebear had become so pronounced in him during his bitter months of imprisonment that his mother's gentler spirit now seldom, if ever, wholly possessed him.

Squaring his jaw Richard took the knife between his two hands and began hewing vigorously at the dirt

94 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

above his head. It showered about him thinly at first, but as he desperately jabbed the knife in deeper and deeper an avalanche descended upon him. The earth's surface had collapsed, its support weakened by his tunneling, and he looked up to see the open sky above him. There was no moon, and angry black clouds hurried after each other across the void. But to the boy's eyes, accustomed as they were to a shut-in darkness that can seldom be equaled out of doors, even on the most storm-ridden night, the sky seemed almost aglow, and altogether the most beautiful sight he had ever seen!

Crouching in the end of the tunnel, his heart aflame with renewed hope and courage, Richard gazed upward, listening to the insistent tramp of the sentinels on their beat. Judging from the distant muffled rhythm of their tread, he concluded that they were on the other side of the wall, on guard between it and the prison. If this was the case, and the thickness of the wall lay between him and them, he was safe.

Just as he had fully made up his mind to leave his lair and venture into the open, the steps grew more distinct; and Richard, peering through the gloom, faintly discerned the figures of two men saluting each other at the far end of the prison wall. Then to his dismay he saw one of them turn and come tramping toward him. Breathlessly he crouched down and waited. Nearer came the echoing tread, within a few feet of where he was, then down past the full length of the wall. Peering out he saw the sentinel reach its corner, where a third figure could be seen in vague outline—and after an apparent exchange of a few words, come back again, only to pass him and go on as before.

So the prison was guarded *outside* its outer wall on all four sides! There was a rule too, evidently, that

the guards must meet every so often. In view of this discovery Richard realized that never for a moment could he be rid of at least one sentinel, and only for a very few minutes at a time out of sight of two! If he jumped out from cover and tried to overcome the sentinel on the beat nearest him, the noise of their scuffle might reach the ears of the others. If this happened, even though Richard overcame him, it was not likely that he could also overcome the others who would of course run to their fellow's rescue. Besides, an alarm would be given at once, and then Richard could never escape! He crouched and thought, while the steady pacing both inside and outside the wall continued.

Finally no longer able to stand the uncertainty of what he should do, he raised his head well above the ground, looked quickly about him, and ducked below again just before the sentinel turned to tramp past him once more. In this quick searching glance he had dimly made out the woods that ran along back of the prison wing from which he had just come. The trees that loomed up in a dark mass must be within a couple of hundred yards of him, as nearly as he could judge in the darkness, and a clear stretch of plain lay between. The sentinel's march from corner to corner of the prison wall must be twice that distance, Richard calculated. But even taking this into account, did he make a successful dash and reach the woods while the nearest sentinel's back was turned, his flying figure would surely be seen by one of the other two, and such a figure seen at that time of night, and in such a place, would necessarily arouse suspicion. He would be fired on and followed at once. What should he do?

Yet a wild dash for the woods, with the risk of being seen which that entailed, seemed the only possible way,—and so, half raising himself, Richard was about

96 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

to start—when changing his mind he dropped out of sight down into the hole again, and waited.

Back and forth, back and forth, the sentinel paced, each time passing quite near the crouching boy. Keenly watching the guard in his regular march Richard reckoned the distance between them, and concluded that his arms could doubtless reach and trip the man as he passed. Yet he hesitated to attack him in this manner, fearing for the noise of his fall.

Again he looked across at the woods. It would be impossible to gain their shelter unseen with the man on his present beat. To risk an attack, therefore, seemed to him the wisest course to adopt.

His decision was made. Lifting his arm to the surface of the ground, but keeping his head bowed, Richard waited while the sentinel tramped forward past him once again, saluted his fellow watch-dog, turned, and began his return beat, his back now turned to Richard and the hole.

With the swift and sure stroke of his former agility, born of a life in the open, Richard's arm shot out and grasped the man's legs.

Crash!!! The fellow went upon his face; and Richard, scrambling from the tunnel before his surprised victim could utter a sound, dealt him such a blow on the back of his head that he lay still.

Calling desperately on every nerve and muscle in his body, he ran swiftly forward, quickly covering the plain and gaining the woods just as the sentinel at the north corner came into sight.

As he raced Richard vividly pictured to himself the scene that, from the sounds plainly heard, he knew was even now being enacted behind him; for when the sentinel on the north beat was not met as usual by his fellow on Richard's beat, he had investigated and found the stunned man lying face down. With this

second man's call of alarm a memory of sound that acted like a whip lash came to Richard, and he recalled the deep-throated, doomed-voiced baying of the dogs he had seen on his entrance to the prison. He had occasionally heard them from his prison cell as they were turned loose to run to earth some human creature less well cared for than themselves; and now Richard felt sure that before the passage of many moments more they would doubtless be turned loose on *his* track.

On he ran stumblingly, his heart pounding from the unwonted exertion, yet his life-long knowledge of the woods standing him in good stead. Fortunately there was little underbrush and the trees were fairly far apart, so he made good progress. Not many minutes had elapsed before a perfect bedlam of noises succeeded the sentinel's first cry of alarm, and Richard could distinguish the excited calls of men, the boom-boom of the deeply resounding prison bell, and the sharp crack of pistol shots, accompanied by the blood-thirsty yap-yap-yap of the hounds as they were unleashed upon his trail!

He had soon passed through the woodland and, reaching a river that flowed just beyond it, plunged in without a moment's hesitation and began to swim. In the dark he could not tell in which direction he was going, but giving himself up to the current of the stream allowed it to carry him unresisting, striving only to keep his head above water, and fervently praying that the river might take him to safety.

He had not drifted far, however, before he began to realize, with a terrible wave of horror, that the excited voices were drawing rapidly nearer him. Yet the yap-yapping of the dogs came from afar off up the stream.

More and more distinct came the voices of the men

98 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

until he heard them just above the bank by which he was being carried. The running of feet echoed across the water. Lights flashed!

Then it dawned over Richard what he had done. Not knowing the lay of the land, and being totally unable to see more than a few feet ahead of him in the dark, he had plunged into the river that flowed directly by the east side of the prison, and the current was carrying him back the whole length of the escape he had been able to make through the woods.

More waving lights and high-pitched, excited voices came from the shore ahead of him, and he rapidly left the yapping of the dogs far behind. He was directly between the two groups of his pursuers. If he turned and attempted to swim back up the river, the dogs would discover him. If he continued to go with the current, he must pass directly beside the prison wall!

God in heaven, what should he do! The locket about his neck tightened as the wet cord shrank. He thought of his little mother for almost the first time in many bitter weeks, and his spirit subconsciously pleaded with hers to help him now!

Swiftly he drifted on, nearer, ever nearer the prison whose lights, as he could now see, were reflected in the water. Black figures of guards sprang up out of the night and stood forth in rugged contour against the glow of their own lanterns, as they hurried from the back entrance of the prison and joined Richard's other pursuers.

Close up to the bank the current swung him; but the men, hurrying on toward the spot where the dogs cried out their warning that he had crossed the river, did not see him. Yet at the very moment of this encouragement his heart seemed to stop beating, and he felt his legs grow limp and useless, for ringing out clear and strong there came a voice.

"Halt!" it rang out through the darkness, and Richard heard a bullet sing over his head.

Ducking just below the surface of the water he held his breath and swam on, only to feel something knock against his side, ensnaring his clothing, and before he could resist drag him down. He struggled free and rose to the surface, only to encounter a log the under twigs of which had caught in his shirt.

With a feeling of utter relief he grasped this and clung to it, hiding on its far side while shots fell about him in a fusillade, and he heard an excited exchange of comments between the lantern-bearing men upon the bank.

"It ain't him I tell you!"

"But I seen a man's head."

"Aw, you couldn't have. He crossed the river I tell you, and the dogs are scenting him there right now! It was a log you seen," and whipping out his pistol he fired shot after shot toward the drifting object behind which Richard hid.

The shots whistled and sang about the cowering boy but left him unscathed, and he floated on protected by the accompanying log.

The man who had spoken last laughed. "Don't you see they are just logs?" and he broke his revolver preparatory to refilling its chambers. Then pointing again, he said: "See, there's a drift of 'em coming down from Sawyer's logging camp. Come on!" and followed by the other the two went on up the bank toward the spot where the dogs still bayed.

Richard rapidly drifted with the current down past the prison. Excitement over his escape held sway there, and as he passed beside the gray rock wall upon the river bank he could see and hear the hunt for him growing in determination and vehemence.

Safely he floated by, soon leaving the prison and the

100 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

hunting men far behind, and with a feeling of joy, in spite of his weary weakness, knew that he was now well on his way toward freedom. His hands and arms had become numb from their long clinging hold upon the log, and sometimes he felt that he must cast loose from it; yet he did not dare do so, knowing himself to be too weak to swim, or even keep himself above water in the swift running current. Many times during the journey he longed to climb upon the log and rest, but that too seemed risky; and so he clung and drifted, using all the force of will he possessed in order to hold on, surrounded as he was now by many other logs that had come swirling down in the spring flood of the little river.

He had drifted what seemed to him many hours when the log, reaching a sudden sharp turn in the stream, jammed against the bank, catching hard and fast to the overhanging roots and twigs that were barely submerged. With a feeling of relief at being held stationary, even for a few moments, Richard laboriously dragged his soaked body up upon the log's wide surface, and lying face down clasped his arms about it and lay still.

After gaining this vantage point he tried to make up his mind to push off from the shore and go drifting on into the future that awaited him; but a sense of utter exhaustion overcame him, and he could do naught but lie and wait for returning strength. All points of compass had been erased in the darkness, and though he had tramped through the very woods above him for miles along the margin of the bay, he did not know this, and supposed he knew nothing about the interior waterway in which he now found himself. Vaguely it again occurred to his mind, half paralyzed from weariness and cold, that he must push on; but his lassitude ever growing he finally gave up,

and closing his eyes fell asleep, while the log, in spite of his weight, remained safely entangled, held by the roots above the surface of the water on a level with a muskrat hole in the bank.

The April sun stole up to smile night shadows away, and there reached the boy the pungent smell of the earth, through which springtime buds were pushing. He smiled in his sleep and then, stirring, awoke.

In the glare of the early morning, pale as it was, he quickly closed his eyes. The light caused him agony. With one of his hands he bathed his eyes, trying vainly to open them and look about. His long imprisonment in the dark had made it impossible for him to stand the unwonted daylight, so he stripped a piece of cloth from his shirt and tied it about his head, thus shading his eyes as much as possible from the glare.

"I wonder where I am?" he said aloud in the husky altered voice he himself scarcely recognized as his own, stiffly raising himself to a sitting posture, yet watching from beneath his bandage to see that he did not tilt the log.

"You're free, I should say, Sonny! And a damned good thing from the looks of ye," a deep voice said, making him jump and then crouch back against the log.

"Now don't be scared of *me*," a man on the bank above said. "I decorated the inside of such yagers myself once," pointing to Richard's stripes. "I wouldn't squeal on you—jest feed that information to yourself."

Squinting up Richard saw a good-natured, common face grinning sympathetically down at him, while the man continued jocosely: "Stripes ain't very conducive to spiritual thought, as the highbrows remark; but say, where did ye pipe it from, pal?"

The boy looked puzzled at this jargon, but instinctively trusting the fellow's candid blue eyes, he said hoarsely: "From State's Prison," pointing up the river.

"Hully gee!" the man exclaimed with unfeigned admiration. "How'd ye do it?"

"Dug my way out," Richard replied.

"Well, you be *some* weasel and duck, believe me, if you worked your flipper down this spring freshet!" and he looked at the river swirling past. "Where booked, Sonny?"

Again Richard looked puzzled, and seeing it the man translated himself. "Where does your excursion ticket get punched?—Where you vamoosing—going? See?"

"I don't know," Richard answered vaguely, trying to look about him at the woods which were just beginning to show signs of spring. The willows along the river bank were bright with coming leaf, while further away on a hillside Richard could see the rose-color of rhodora bushes.

"Then you better pipe it along o' me," the fellow said cordially, his blue eyes smiling into Richard's half shielded ones. "Here, nibble my bait, and I'll cork you up," and he held his hairy hand down over the bank toward the boy on the marooned log.

Richard took his hand and pulled himself upright, only to have the log break loose from its anchorage and, rolling over, go floating out into midstream.

But the man had caught Richard's hand firmly at the first grasp, and though Richard had plunged into the river at the log's overturning, he was now vigorously dragged up the bank before he could sink.

"Right-o!" his rescuer said, as Richard scrambled up, and dropping limply at the man's feet hid his smarting eyes from the light.

"Gizzard pretty floppy, eh?" and the man put his hand on Richard's chest to feel the violent exhausted beating of his heart. "I'm some doc, I am!" he said in explanation. "Was chore boy in Ellis Island hospital before I began snagging the wild goose—bagging the game," he explained himself—"stealing, in plain American. See?" and he chafed the boy's cold hands, pumping his arms up and down. Then pulling a flask from his pocket he put it to Richard's lips. "Drink," he commanded.

Richard took a deep swallow of the cheap stuff with a shudder and lay still while it ran through his chilled body like fire, stopping his chattering teeth. "You can ride in my Ford, all right, all right," the man by his side continued; "like your looks. Some gent!" and he deliberately looked Richard over in appraisement, while a soft light came into his eyes and he said huskily: "I had a pal like you once. The *genuwine* article, all-wool, a yard wide and unshrinkable. The law corpsed him—damn it! He warn't to blame neither. The cop woulter got him if he hadn't got the cop that night. But the noose for his after that!" and Richard's companion's face turned black with anger as he went on:

"He was raised in reformatories, drat 'em, like me. He never had a square deal nohow, gent though he looked to be and *was*, for he knowed who his pa was, after awhile—though his pa never knowed *him*, oh no!" and the man's face sneered. "He tried to go straight—jes like me, at first. But what's the use? Jes do one thing that happens to be agin the law when you're a fool kid, and the law gets your goat forever amen. Him and me, we met in the Reformatory—then in the 'Pen'! We hit it off together. See? Him that was so well appearing took to shoplifting and the like. Me, I took to the dark doorway dirty

work. We'd had a grand edication for such work, bein' shut up since we was kids and learnt nothin'! Besides, nobody wants to give an ex-convict 'honest labor,' and where there ain't no honest labor, Sonny, there's always plenty else to make a living by. Folks is queer, believe me! They will help a beggar to git work so he won't have to be a beggar; but if a pincher tries to stop stealing and go straight, industry gives him the merry go-by. See?

"Well, one night me and my pal we got the lu-lu bird, and thought we was it. We borrowed a few eagles from the state bank with the aid of a friend, 'Jimmy Crowbar.' But Bill, that was my gentleman pal, he had to croak the cop to get away, and—and they *canned* him!"

Richard's companion choked, tears showing in his blue eyes. "I give myself up to save him; but it warn't no use. I told the gospel, but they wouldn't believe me! Since gittin' out, therefore, I'm *carefuller*," and his face took on a cunning look, "but I gits what I want when I want it, jes the same. See? So pal," putting his hand kindly on Richard's shoulder, "pipe it along o' me. I need a pal. I'll divvy fair, honest to Gawd! I don't look like no gent, but we can tandem it, you bein' the show horse, wid yer white hair and fine black eyes, and I'll do the pulling. See?"

During this soliloquy Richard had looked up at the man, his face becoming more and more puzzled; and now at the reference to his white hair he forgot his smarting eyes in wondering if the fellow was crazy.

"My hair's black," he said as simply as a child. And putting his hand to his head, he stroked back the wet locks.

This time it was the man's turn to look puzzled, and shaking his head he looked at Richard and said:

"Me for the bug house if I'm nutty; but your cranium looks white to me, by George!" and he continued to look at Richard quizzically, while Richard stared back at him.

"Here, see for yourself," the man said, noticing Richard's doubtful expression; and he handed him a small mirror from his pocket.

Richard took the mirror. As he caught sight of his own unshaven face a deadly pallor overspread it. Trembling, he put out one of his hands and took hold of the other's shoulder to steady himself, while he gazed on into the little mirror.

His hair, which eight months before had been black, was entirely silvered. His eyes were bloodshot and swollen from the unaccustomed light, while his face was that of a middle-aged man, so drawn and full of lines was it in spite of its covering of a stubby first beard.

Could it be possible, he wondered, that the prison had left him marked for life like this. It seemed incredible! Yet the little mirror could not lie. Perhaps it was his eyes, he thought hopefully. They hurt him so he doubtless was not seeing aright; and shifting the mirror, he gazed at the reflection of his unfamiliar self while his companion watched him, feeling in his rough kindliness that Richard was suffering and that it was no time for any of his slangy remarks.

Finally Richard spoke: "How old do you think I am?" he asked.

"Oh, about so so middling. About my age," the man answered. "Why?"

"Because I'm just nineteen," Richard answered. Then angry at the tragedy of old age being thrust upon him during the time of youth, he exclaimed: "The people of this state shall suffer for this. So help me God!" and throwing himself down upon the ground,

dry sobs shook his poor abused body, once so full of youthful beauty and now so weakened and scarred by the injustice of cruel imprisonment.

At this show of the boy's suffering, the rough man by his side was deeply touched; for naturally not of criminal instinct, in all probability he would not have become an actual criminal had his early environment been all that it should have been. In spite of his life of thieving, deep down in him there blossomed a loyalty that had made him a trusted friend, even though his pal had been a crook like himself, and now he readily responded to the uplifting influence of sympathy for his fellow-man.

"Sonny," he said, patting Richard's bowed head, "I'm damned sorry." Then falling back into his tough's vernacular, he went on: "But cut out the weeps, kid. As pals, you and me will *can* 'em! I'll tell you my plans," and sitting down quite near the boy he talked to him soothingly.

Soon Richard's sobs ceased, and interested in one whose experience had been enough like his own to form a bond of sympathy, Richard felt springing up in him a real friendship for this man, a friendship that a few months before would have been utterly impossible for them both.

"Sonny," the man went on, "as I reemarked before, ex-convicts can't git honest jobs in this here star-spangled map of ours. Citizens are free and equal—I don't think! So I'm out for dishonest jobs. See? I 'got an old lady and two twin kids at home, and they ain't peeped nothing about my past, leastwise the kids ain't—and you never seen two finer bucks!" smiling with paternal pride. "The old gal's thinker works overtime, too, believing that I'm heaving straight these days. But say, I can't sail straight, I tell you; for them blessed ones needs chink! And the way I'm

a-making chink is the only way folks'll let me make it, now that I'm an ex-jailbird. See? There wasn't no such thing as chink coming while I worked five good hard years up there," pointing up the river. "Yet folks say there ain't no slavery these days! What do you call it, Sonny, when a fellow's made to work ten hours a day and don't git nothin' to send home, and is turned out at the end of his sentence unable to git a bloomin' thing to do? Maybe it is his fault that he went to prison, as folks say, but is it a fair deal to take a bread winner away from his folks, and leave them to starve?—for starvin' it is, pretty nigh—for the *family* of a convict can't git honest work neither, oftentimes."

Richard had sat listening eagerly, his face flushing and paling with anger. The rough fellow's words echoed so exactly his own bitterness against law and its injustice that he had said nothing during the whole story, and now only nodding assent he motioned the man to go on with his tale.

"Well, pal, my plan is this," the fellow continued. Then breaking off he interrupted himself by saying: "But look here, Sonny, you'd better fairy-godmother them Cinderellas encasing your carcass—shed your clothes, in plain American," and he touched Richard's wet prison clothes. Then grinning, he unbuttoned the dark suit he himself had on, stepped out of it and handed it to him, saying: "Here, doll yourself up like a Christmas tree."

Richard gasped with astonishment at the enacting of this scene, for the man before him, though he had just given him an entire suit of clothes, stood fully dressed in another. Seeing his amazement, the fellow said to Richard: "I'm the original all in one prize package, Sonny. Travels with me trunk on me back. It's easier; and I must reemark, quite often it's *safer*.

In my biz a quick change of looks is advantageous, believe me!"

Richard dressed himself in the borrowed suit, while the man, to get rid of the tell-tale prison stripes, wrapped the cast-off clothes around a big stone and threw it far out into the river, where it at once sunk to the bottom. Then he resumed his recital where he had left off.

"Well, as I was saying, this is my plan. There's a gold-lined guy in the burg near here who turned out my folks into the cold, cold world for lack of rent while I was up," jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the far-away prison. "Molly, she brought them kids here from up state soon after they pipped—was born, you know—so as to be near me who never seed 'em, being as I was sent up afore their time. Well that guy he woulde forced my Molly to starve, or worse; but she was on the square. It's him that's got chink enough to make a corpse glad, Sonny; and it's them kids of mine that's goin' to git the eddication and chance I never got if I can pull off this job. See? And the faithful old gal's hoofs are goin' to pitter patter along Easy Street, too. Gawd knows she deserves it!"

Then with eyes flashing he leaned nearer Richard and half whispered: "He keeps his spondulics in his wigwam while he flies de coop, goes bunny hugging around lecturing to churches, converting sinners. See? Calls himself a *Eevangelist* the past six months, though he used to be a tight-wad bank president," and the man laughed. "Now he tells sinners he was 'called' by the Lord to this present job because of his son's serving sentence in a 'place made by the wrath of the Almighty.' I've piped him, Sonny, and it's good as a show to see him beggin' sinners to repent before they become like his son——"

But he got no further, for grasping the man's shoulder Richard broke in excitedly: "What's the name of the town? What's *his* name—the man's? Tell me quick!"

Richard's companion looked at the boy's flushed face. "Swallow your cud—hold your potatoes—keep your pants on," he soothed, thinking that the half-starved, exhausted boy was unduly exciting himself. "We're near the 'bu-oootiful yap-burg of Dunham-on-the Coast,' as Mr. Cook would say, and the man's name——"

"It's Deacon Dennison, isn't it?" Richard burst out with a square-chinned finality.

"Why yes, that's his handle, all right; but how did you guzzle the fluke—peep it—know that?" he translated himself as usual.

"Never mind how I knew it," Richard answered bitterly. "But I do know," and he sat picturing to himself the scene of his father's enlarging vocally upon his, Richard's, lawless ways, doubtless thus working himself and others into an emotional religious fervor as was his wont.

For the first time in his life Richard uttered a profane sentence he had often heard, and grinding his teeth together said to his companion:

"Go on with your plan. I'm with you, whatever it is."

"Well, Sonny," the man resumed, "my idee is this: That guy's tepee—wigwam—hang-out, you know, is on the straight and narrow path—main road, you know, but back from it—understand? There is some spinach—forest preserve—trees, surrounding it, you know. See? Well, *you* deerfoots yourself into them portals; goes up the zag—path, you know—and asks to cast your sky-blue optics on the deacon because of your interest in your soul's salvation. See? I'm told

there's a regular Y. M. C. A. movement goin' on in that way with the deacon, bein' as he has just dis-owned his son, and will leave spondulics lying around for somebody when he kicks the bucket. Understand? The youths of Dunham is gettin' pretty religious these days, and we might just as well be in the game, too. See? Well, while he's a-prayin' over you, fer he does pray over everybody, I sneaks in and bags the swag——”

“But man alive, I can't do that!” Richard broke in. “He'd know me!” Then at the man's stare, he had to explain: “I—I used to live in Dunham!”

“Oh,” the burglar said thoughtfully. “So that's it, is it! Well, now, that's punk. But let's see,” and burying his unshaven chin in his hand, he sat gazing at the boy in disappointment at this frustration of his plan. Richard, too, sat looking thoughtfully; and then a bitter smile crossed his face. Reaching his hand out toward the man, he said:

“Give me that mirror again.”

The other obeyed, and gazing at his own reflection long and steadily Richard's heart rejoiced at his changed look, though he could not but feel alarmed at the smarting of his eyes and their blurred vision.

“I don't believe he would ever recognize me in a thousand years!” he exclaimed aloud. Then he chuckled. The man's daring plan appealed to him immensely. If it could be carried out it would not only enable him to make better his escape, giving him money that was rightfully his through his mother, but would also be the most deliciously humorous moment of his life. It was worth the risk. Forgetting his fatigue, even his smarting eyes, Richard jumped up with alacrity.

“All right, partner,” he said, looking strangely like his father in his thin-lipped determination. “It's a

go. Shake hands on it," and he took the man's hand in his. "I'll do it! Point the way," and laughing rather wildly Richard accepted the guidance of his companion as he skulked in and out among the trees, leading him ever nearer Dunham through miles of spring woods, yet delaying their actual entrance into the village until night should have descended again.

"Say, Sonny," the man said in the course of their discussion of the details involved in the carrying out of their plans. "How does your laundry ticket read, anyhow? What's your trade-mark—your handle—your name, you know?"

"Denneth Richardson," Richard answered without a moment's hesitation, the perverted name coming to him as naturally now as his plan for crime. "And yours?"

"Sam Simmons," the other answered in a low voice. "But push in your base stop—can your squeaks," placing his finger to his lips. "We've got to lay low till moon time. Here, feed the pie-like-mother-used-to-make to your physiognomy," and he handed the boy food from his pocket, watching him almost fondly as he took it and, lying flat in the woods, ate absent-mindedly while he gazed up into the restful green of spruces, through which sparse patches of subdued light filtered.

A bluejay flashed by in greeting. Chickadees flew down about him in friendliness; and perched high up on a spruce bough an olive-green kinglet with golden crown aglow sat and watched him. It was spring. He was free.

CHAPTER VIII

UP THE familiar pathway to the lamp-lighted white house went Denneth Richardson, Sam Simmons close upon his heels. The shades at the windows were up, and as they neared the house they could see Deacon Dennison's angular figure seated idly at his library table.

A pang went through the boy, he knew not whether of anger or of longing, both feelings were so intermingled; and for a moment he imagined he saw his mother's frail gray-clad figure in her accustomed place by his father's side. Then under the influence of this hallucination of her who stood for all that was best in his nature, Denneth felt the thing he was about to do would be wholly impossible. Half turning, he started to speak to his companion, to tell him he simply could not commit the crime they had planned; but seeing a movement in the room he stopped, for at this moment the sound of their footsteps evidently reached the deacon's ears, and knowing himself to have an audience this pious man picked up his Bible and with a spectacular gesture of humility began to read.

At this well-known attitude of hypocrisy, bitter loathing for his father surged over Denneth, crowding out his more kindly feelings, and squaring his jaw he walked up the steps and deliberately rang the bell.

"Around to the left," he whispered to the man below him in the dark. "Second window—there's no lock on it. Go through that room, turn to your right, and go into another. The safe is there. By the time you've worked the combination as I've told you, I'll have the old boy fixed so you can make a get-a-way. Don't you worry! Even if I am green at this game.

I know how I can manage *him*. Give me a whistle—the screech-owl hoot, you know—when you are through with your part.” Then as the door was opened by the deacon, Denneth stepped forward and disappeared into the house from the other’s sight.

The hall was dimly lighted, and as his eyes met those of his father he could not see the slightest sign of recognition. Taking courage at this, he spoke in the voice that the prison had made so unrecognizably husky.

“Brother Dennison,” he said, rolling his swollen eyes piously, “I have come to talk to you about my soul’s salvation.”

The deacon beamed. “Come in, my son, come in!” he said hospitably, entirely unsuspecting the identity of his visitor, and leading the way into the grim, familiar library. “Ask and ye shall be forgiven. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and the door shall be opened unto you.” You are not the first man to come to me thus.”

Denneth bit his lips at these words, but controlling the sinister amusement that was bubbling up in him, took the chair his all-unconscious father offered him, and watched him as he fussed about looking for his glasses. Presently he picked up his Bible and seated himself within the circle of light shed by the green reading-lamp, preparatory to a long and interesting wrestle with this sinner’s soul.

Deacon Dennison was in his element. Though he possessed a nature at once cold and shrewd and cruel, there dwelt also in him an emotionalism, a weak sentimentality, that is sometimes found in otherwise hard natures, and which had been, in the deacon’s case, the cause of certain amorous escapades during his youth, the while he scrupulously observed the forms of religion without any approximation to its true spirit.

Sanctimoniousness cloaked his sins, for which he experienced neither remorse nor indeed even an appreciation of their gravity. Now, in his middle age, his over-developed ego had made him actually believe in the spirituality of that emotionalism, and he considered this characteristic which was his weakness to be his strength. He had reached a stage further along than hypocrisy; for he believed firmly in his own perfection and power, perverted though it was. Persons of advanced years sometimes persuade themselves to regard as spiritual that which in their youth was the result of purely physical impulse, though such natures know not the true meaning of spirituality. Physical existence for man, in itself purely animal, is hallowed by the indwelling of his spiritual existence, though the physical and spiritual natures remain distinct; but that fact is frequently lost sight of by natures like the deacon's; and so, though his life had been guided by anything but a spiritual point of view, he now looked upon his past as having been all that it should have been, and believed himself called to guide others.

"Since my very babyhood God has been my guide," he said benignly to the boy seated in front of him, "and this approaching age which you witness is my 'reward of virtue,'" touching his gray beard.

It was on the tip of Denneth's tongue to put forth an evolution-argument which years before he and his mother had often discussed. That is, that a long life is given for discipline and the development of certain powers and virtues, and not for reward. He believed that souls were divine and immortal; that though temporarily tabernacled in man, the purpose of their sojourn in human beings on this earth must be that they may learn such lessons and gain such experience as in some inscrutable way may fit them to attain a

higher existence. In the light of this belief, therefore, the spirit, which mankind everywhere feels instinctively to be immortal, has but a very temporary abiding place here, and is continually *evolving forward in the everlasting quest of eventual perfection and fitness to dwell with God.* But the misery of the past months had blunted the vitality and influence of his faith; and so deliberately putting all this aside he now held his peace and said:

"Yes, Deacon, you have been blessed with a long life. But what can I do to be more like you. What can I do to be saved?"

The deacon's thin lips smiled. If Denneth had been an eye witness to recent scenes of the deacon's evangelistic conversions—if he had repeated verbatim the supplicating penitents' every word, he could not have acted more to the liking of the deacon than he did now.

"You have the right spirit, my son," he commended warmly; then rolling his eyes upward, he continued: "My life, spent in prayer and fasting, spent in the fear of a great and jealous God, has been a long and happy one, save for one thing—" He paused impressively. With a mental sneer, Denneth knew exactly what was coming, and was not disappointed when his father went on, his voice breaking dramatically.

"Apple of my eye, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, the son of my bosom has heaped suffering and anguish upon my gray hairs! Though I gave him freely of my greater knowledge, though I wrestled with his wayward soul, hoping to show him the Light that has always been mine, he has bowed my head in sorrow, disgraced me in the eyes of the world. Born with me to guide him, fostered and fed upon the Scriptures, he turned from the straight and nar-

row path, turned from my love and the fear of God, to deliberately walk in the paths of iniquity!"

Then in a voice full of well-modulated heart-breaks, practised until, from an emotion-producing standpoint, at least, they were perfect, Deacon Dennison told the boy before him a melodramatic story of his own son's waywardness which, he said, had eventually led to crime, and thence to prison; in which place he was even now suffering the righteous wrath that his Almighty Father saw fit to visit upon such as he!

Throughout this recitation Denneth sat motionless, his jaw squared, his fingers tensed. Before his imprisonment, when his mother's nature in him had held sway, he could not have restrained himself thus hypocritically. During his solitary months spent in the crime factory, the breeding spot for cunning with its accompaniment of vindictiveness, he had learned the policy of *waiting* in order to accomplish his revenge. And so now he listened silently, giving no sign of the battle that was raging within him, nor that his keen ears were pricked for the signal of Sam Simmons, who was noiselessly robbing the house.

Finally Deacon Dennison suggested, as was his usual program, that they kneel in holy prayer. Denneth grimly knelt down, and as he did so the hallucination of his mother's actual presence in the room again possessed him, and a surge of memory came over him, weakening his criminal resolve. Yet he put aside his mother's pleading face and, bending his head in mock humility, listened while the deacon prayed:

"Oh, Father of all, Jehovah," he supplicated in his best stage voice, "we are unclean. We are full of iniquity. There is no good in us. We are as the dust beneath Thy feet, not fit for Thee to tread upon. Oh, Heavenly Father, there has come unto me an iniquitous stranger from out of the night, a man who

has walked with sin upon the highroad. Teach him that there is a fire burning and crackling beneath his very feet! Teach him that Hell's gate is wide open! Let his heart be humbled before Thee. Chastise him that he may fully see the error of his ways. Show him Thy mighty wrath that he may fear to stand against Thee—Father of all. Jehovah——”

But soft and low the hoot-owl whistle broke into this prayer, the greater part of which Denneth had heard daily during his life at home, and with a cat-like spring the boy was upon the deacon and had quickly pulled him from his knees.

Taken completely by surprise the deacon did not so much as gasp as the boy stretched him out and, stuffing his handkerchief into his mouth, sat on his chest while he bound him hand and foot. Had Denneth allowed his better self to come uppermost even for a moment, he would have felt alarmed at his own gloating over the accomplishment of a physical feat directed against a feebler fellow-creature, recognizing in it the prophecy of a blameful future. But his prison-bred bitterness was too fully in possession of him now to allow him to realize how far he had dropped from his former freedom of right thought and brave impulse. Nor did he know that he was acting exactly as his father would have acted under like provocation. So it is always with us. We seldom see in ourselves those traits which we despise in others.

“Keep still!” his captor commanded, as the man upon the floor vainly tried to move. “I’m not going to hurt you,” and going to the window he opened it and said something in a low voice to Sam Simmons.

There was a whispered answer, and then Denneth banged the window shut and went back to the prostrate deacon, whose eyes were rolling wildly from

side to side, the weak tears splashing from them upon the floor.

Drawing up a chair, his son seated himself nonchalantly. Then he cleared his throat and spoke:

"John Dennison," he said, in a voice more like his former voice than he had thus far been able to muster, "you don't recognize me since the transformation in me made by you in the name of religion, law, and justice; but I am that wayward son of yours that you've been talking so much about lately!" And in seeming carelessness he deliberately drew out the locket that he always wore about his neck, fingering it in perfect confidence of the assurance it would give as to his identity.

The deacon started in spite of his bound state, whimpering like a frightened animal in his half-choked discomfort; but with a cruelty and coldness that he would have hardly believed himself capable of, Denneth continued:

"For almost twenty years you bullied me and made my life—and *hers*—" swallowing hard at reference to his mother, "unbearable! When my mother married, she had a little money. She told me so, so none of your denials!" as his father feebly shook his head. "I know the exact amount, and that you would never let her spend it. Well, I've come for that money. In fact it is already well on the road to my pockets," and he glanced toward the window, smiling bitterly. Sam Simmons's footsteps could be heard softly receding.

The terrorized deacon tried to mumble something, but the gag in his mouth prevented articulation, and his son went on as the other lay trembling violently, whining out handkerchief-choked but plainly supplicating noises:

"Right now as I talk to you, my partner, another

'jail-bird,' is making away with your 'chink,' as he calls it. He helped himself to the contents of your safe. I told him the combination. That 'chink' will probably just about cover the amount you *owe* me—that is, as to money. Perhaps a little more, perhaps a little less."

Then more bitterly: "But as to what you owe me for your bullying, your unfairness to me—and *her*—since my babyhood; as to what price you should pay for bringing me into the world through no desire for a son, but in a moment of satisfying your own lower nature—then robbing me of every chance for development of whatever good there may be in me—well, there can *be* no adequate price paid. When a parent brings a child into the world under any but the most sacred of impulses and paternal desire, and then, having begotten the child in carnal wantonness and not in the noble sacredness of God's true meaning of the marriage relation, when he ruins that child's chances for happiness, whether intentionally or unintentionally, there can be no human punishment that is adequate for either crime!"

Pausing a moment he looked scornfully at the blanched-cheeked man, then resumed: "There is one thing that I can do, however—and will! You and this state shall pay me, at least in part, for my suffering, so help me God!"

Then getting up he said: "And now I will go. Think over what I have said—it may help you," and at this indulgence in his characteristic manner of preaching, the boy's face took on the exact look of the opinionated, domineering one before him. "If you ever tell who it was that robbed you, or in any way interfere with my life again, I shall kill you as cold-bloodedly as—as—you have *killed the good in me!*"

And striding from the room Denneth went out into the night where the other robber awaited him.

* * * * *

Two years passed, and Denneth Richardson, in connivance with Sam Simmons and his jimmy-crow-bar, had made a marked success, first in the city of Greenport and its environs, to which place they had gone after the robbery of Deacon Dennison, and later in Hampton.

Nobody had suspected that the well-groomed, shrewd-eyed young stranger with his slightly bearded face and prematurely silvered hair was other than the successful capitalist he appeared to be; for good food and freedom had quickly aided youth in restoring at least a semblance of the boy's old-time vigor; and now, seated in the easy chair in his own comfortable rooms, Denneth was going over with Sam Simmons a plot for a burglary to take place that very night at Thornley-by-the-Sea, a fashionable colony on the shore a few miles out from the city. A big dance had been planned by the summer contingent which, in the opinion of these two expert men, would give them an opportunity the like of which they had already several times availed themselves of. Sam had come for his final report before he and Denneth should go out by different routes to join in their well-conceived venture.

New clothes and an office and pretense of honest work, with his odd hours spent in the woods surrounding his new home, had wrought even a greater change in Denneth than improved health; and though he was still far from the steel-muscled young woodgod of former years, to those who had not known him then he bore little, if any, outward sign of the prison's degrading effect upon him. With his criminal success had come a physical well being and a feeling of

security that gave him the aplomb of a man of the world. Yet there was one little worry ever growing in the back of his mind. Often he felt alarmed about his eyes, one of them more especially. But fearing the probing questions of an oculist, he said little and did less about it. Nevertheless, as time went on, he had more and more frequent pain, followed by days of rather awkward dimness in that member. He dared not dwell upon its possible meaning. Finally, however, he found himself obliged to relieve the strain upon them, and entering a shop was soon fitted with a pair of glasses that at least gave him temporary relief.

From the robbing of the people of his state, to which he had consecrated himself on the vengeful day of his escape from the penitentiary, he had quickly persuaded himself that all robberies everywhere were in perfect keeping with his determination to get even with the world; and so very soon he had drifted from Greenport to Hampton, setting up his Lares and Penates in well-appointed rooms there and no longer confining his robberies to the state which had injured him.

The exhilaration and excitement of the burglar's game now appealed to Denneth with irresistible fascination; and though when in the woods among his beloved flowers and creatures of the wild he often felt his mother's spirit struggling for rebirth in him, he always put her image from his mind. He no longer wanted to lead any life save that of lawless adventure. The prison and what he had learned there had wrought in him a spirit of getting something for nothing.

That spirit is the same spirit which makes one man a frenzied financier, often gaining for him wealth and position, and makes another man a thief, gaining for him only poverty and the penitentiary! And this was

the spirit which now dominated Denneth entirely, having conquered his youthful impulses for good and made of him a defiant law-breaker who was determined to wrest from the world all he could in the easiest way, still blindly believing himself to be justified because of the world's injustice to him.

To one who had known Richard in the freedom of his boyhood, or who understood that quality which had made him despise his father's cowardice and sanctimony, this development of lawlessness would not have been altogether surprising. As the young judge who had sentenced him at Dunham had once publicly said, thereby incurring the animosity of certain political powers: "There is no such thing as a *criminal class*. All men are possible criminals, all criminals possible men." It is often only a step from honesty to dishonesty for an energetic and imaginative nature. Some little something goes wrong with the balance wheel of a healthy mind, and there springs up in it a growth of criminality, criminality in the sense of not recognizing one or more of man's laws. The victim of this evil growth then becomes an outcast. He is locked in solitary and unlighted filth, there quickly to become a menace to his country; and all because "Society must be protected!" The poison of that criminal growth is allowed to flourish and spread; is fed, in fact, with physical and moral abuse. On the other hand, if a physical growth like cancer, for instance, appears in that man's body—that is, if he happens not to be a prisoner—he is immediately the subject of the greatest care. Sunshine and clean air is given him. Hundreds of dollars are spent to make his body well. Yet we say we believe that our minds are the only divine part of us! If we do believe this, how can we treat them less well than our bodies? Nevertheless this is constantly and almost universally

done. Surely our spiritual, as well as our political and economic sight, must be blind!

"Is everything all ready?" Denneth now asked of Sam as the latter stood awaiting orders. "Have you positive knowledge that they are all going to be out at the Hawthornes'?"

"Sure thing," Sam answered. "The Irish pippin—the peach, you know, that rules the roost from the kitchen, told me so, believe me; or I wouldn't be sticking my horns through the fence—gittin' my patty cakes stuck on the tar baby—going into the deserted wigwam," he translated himself. "See?"

"But are you sure you can trust her?" Denneth asked, smiling at the remembrance of the description which Sam had given of his, Sam's, attentions to the good-natured Irish maiden-lady of chef persuasions, who had eagerly accepted him as a long-hoped-for steady, and promptly divulged all the secrets of the Hawthorne household.

"On me superior judgment of hopeful females," Sam answered glibly.

His partner laughed at this. "You better look out that your 'missus' doesn't find out about your flirtations!" And then he was immediately sorry he had spoken, for Sam's face took on a serious look. With all his crookedness the rough fellow had never wavered in his loyalty and devotion to his "old gal and the kids"; and in spite of his many years of crime, his mutilated conscience would invariably show signs of life at the mention of their names in connection with his profession. His love for his family showed that he had been made for better things. Noticing this look on Sam's face, the other's sympathetic understanding promptly responded, and he said to Sam as he would have said to any gentleman born in his own social stratum:

"Pardon me, old fellow; I didn't mean to hurt you."

Sam grinned good-naturedly. It was this handsome quality always present in Denneth's treatment of him that had made the other man such a devoted and loyal partner.

"Gozzle your organ—swaller your chew—forgit it, pal," Sam said. "There ain't no caterpillars on your hickory bark. You're all right! And I don't keer what you speels to me as long as we pipes it along together. See? Come on," and he opened the outer door leading from Richard's rooms to the hall of the apartment house in which he lived.

"Well, Sammy," he said, "of course, if you are sure that all of them are to be out, and that you can count on your friend, Miss O'Flanerty——"

"Sure I can count on her," Sam broke in. "What's the matter with you to-night anyhow, pal?" he asked. "You ain't after singing a hymn—doing the deacon stunt—gittin' cold feet, are you?"

Denneth's eyes snapped. "No!" he exclaimed vehemently. "The world owes me the debt it's paying!" and he touched his white hair and the thick-lensed glasses his weakened eyes must needs always wear because of his dark months in the underground cell. "I'm a criminal now all right, Sammy, and intend to stay one. Don't worry!"

"Well, as I was a-saying," Sam went on, "we'll have a clean scoop—a cinch, I tell you. Not an apron in that there pink-tea household is agoing to miss that shindangling dope—ball yer know, at the hotel, believe me! And the onliest pair of pants in the family is away. But I'll jes skin down the fire-escape here whilst you goes out like a gent. It ain't becoming for me to be peeped vamoosing around in yer presence too much—even if I do be a sinner you'se trying to help—as I once explained to the bell boys here. So, so-

long, pal. I'll peep you later," and he closed the door as Denneth Richardson strode on through the halls and down and out into Hampton's well-filled summer streets.

Dressed as he was in a tuxedo suit, he went jauntily to the curb, and there boarding a trolley car that would take him to Thornley-by-the-Sea he glanced back to see Sam Simmons scurry around the corner into sight and start off by another route for the same destination.

The night was a warm one in early July; and as Denneth alighted from the car and walked through the trees toward the twinkling shore settlement, he breathed in deep draughts of the sweet summer air. The moon rose above him and tipped the incoming tide with silver. The outline of the rugged coast with the trees in the foreground, though not nearly so beautiful, reminded him of that other and beloved spot in his native state. A pang went through him at the memory. His mother seemed suddenly very near, and, his conscience reawakening, a remorse for what he now was filled him. Yet, throwing his head back in his wonted manner, he frowned and strode forward defiantly. He would see the thing through.

CHAPTER IX

DENNETH RICHARDSON and Sam Simmons noiselessly jumped apart as a shadow from a waving tree branch was thrown across their path; then seeing what it was they drew together again, and Sam went on:

"It's all right, I tell you, pal. Miss O'Flanerty has jes' answered my signal and told me that she was the only tin can on the dump—oyster in the stew—only chicken in the coop, a lone female squaw in the wigwam, in plain American. See? And she assured me in gentle birdlike notes of encouragement that she was sound asleep at that!" And he winked while Denneth smiled grimly.

"Very well, then. I'll go ahead to the front door, while you keep watch. Never enter a 'wigwam' through the window or by devious ways if you can help it, Sammy," he said nonchalantly, in his superior knowledge of burglary performed by shrewd wits as well as thieving hands. "Tread boldly or soon you won't tread at all," and he swung through the opening in the hedge onto the winding driveway that led to a charming little house nestled in among the trees.

Sam, whistling blithely, walked openly before the house and, then skulking silently around behind it, the next minute came out into view again, every little while repeating this performance. To any possible onlooker he would not have been taken for other than a casual passer-by; nor if seen would Denneth Richardson's boldly striding figure have aroused suspicion. They each knew their business thoroughly; and Sam's eyes, in spite of his appearance as a careless moonlight stroller, were keen in their practised searching for any possible danger that might threaten his clever partner.

On up the driveway Denneth walked. On reaching the steps he lightly mounted them and went to the door, looking neither to right nor left, according to his policy of bold assurance. Deliberately he fitted his skeleton key to the lock as the owner of the house might have done. Then he started. His muscles tensed themselves like steel; for he heard a half-suppressed feminine giggle come out from the moon-dappled tree shadows near him on the broad piazza, and a mischievous voice spoke:

"Good evening, Mr. Stevens," it said gaily, and a young girl stepped full into the moonlight before him.

He could not answer in his surprise, and the girl continued: "You *are* Mr. Stevens, aren't you?" Then laughing, she said: "I would have known you anywhere from your football pictures. And, besides, of course you are!" motioning toward his hand that held the key. Then before Denneth could speak, had he wished to do so, she said in a petulant voice: "Oh, I know it's perfectly dreadful for me to be here like this, and that you think so too! But I just hate him," and she stamped her small foot. "Honestly I do! He's a horrid old thing, and I don't care how much money he's got, I hate him!"

Richard stared. To him the girl's words naturally conveyed no meaning, and of course her presence on the piazza meant great danger to him and his faithful watcher. But somehow this latter thought did not enter his head as, looking down upon her fluffy fair hair, he saw also a pair of big, black-lashed blue eyes gazing up at him, and noticed the appealing look about her face. She looked as his mother must have looked at her age in the pure whiteness of her diaphanous dress. She was exquisite! The prettiest girl he had ever seen!

"Well, why don't you introduce yourself?" she pouted, her eyes laughing up into his. "Because you think I'm a horrid thing to be here on your piazza at this time of ni—day?" and though blushing furiously, she tossed her head in dainty defiance and went on:

"Well, of course, you don't *have* to speak to me if you don't want to, but your cousin, Dolly Little, is my best friend, and I—I—"

With a feeling of manly protectiveness toward this lovely creature, Denneth saw that the girl before him was becoming terribly embarrassed. Gallantly he came to her rescue. It would not do to tell her she was mistaken.

"Of course I'm Mr. Stevens," he said, bowing and forcing himself to smile.

"Well, I'm Marjory Matthews," she said with a finality that told Denneth he must show her immediately that he knew who that person was, or the situation would become more awkward than ever.

"Why, Miss Matthews," he said, "of course. How nice to meet you. I've heard Dolly speak of you often. It's jolly to see you here—"

"It's *not* jolly!" she broke in, again stamping her foot. "And I know it seems horrid to you that I *am* here, and all that, but didn't Dolly write you? And I tell you, I hate him!" a sob rising in her throat.

Great heavens, what should he do? He felt more and more at sea as her disjointed talk continued; but, fortunately before an answer from him was necessary the girl went on:

"Of course, I know I should not say it to you—but I read all your letters to Dolly, and oh," shrugging her white shoulders, "I know so much about you I feel we—we really know each other, don't you? Mama just will have it that I'm going to marry that

scrubby old thing!" again her voice choked, "and I *won't*, I tell you!" stamping vehemently. "That's what I'm doing on your piazza. I didn't know you were here——" Then interrupting herself, she asked indignantly: "If you *are* here, why didn't you answer my note? I wrote you yesterday as I promised Dolly I would, telling you that Mama and I had just arrived at the hotel; and when you didn't answer, I gave you credit for being away! But, of course, if you don't *want* to know me, you don't have to!" and she wheeled on her heel as if to walk away.

Denneth felt desperate. What an idiot he was! Where was his tongue?

"Miss Matthews, I *have* been away. I just got back this minute!" he explained in such a worried tone that she felt he had been scared sufficiently; and so turning, she lifted her face and dimpled up at him, saying in absolute irrelevance:

"Then you do know what a horrid old scrubby thing he is, don't you? Mama made me go to the ball with him and I just wouldn't stay, so there! I don't know another soul yet, and I just had to poke around all evening with him! So I sneaked out and ran away over here. I didn't think anybody was at home. I—I wanted to *think*."

Then in sudden coquetry she exclaimed: "I've been watching the moon all by myself," and she dropped her lashes. "I'm so glad you came. I've been simply dying for you to get home and ask me over to meet your sister and aunt. This is the darlingest, cutest house!" looking about her. "I adore it!"

Her presence on the piazza being thus explained, Denneth felt he was beginning to get his head above water. "Then let's watch the moon together," he said foolishly, smiling down at her childishness, yet wondering what in the world he should do. This frail

little thing, this exquisite girl who looked like the picture his imagination painted of his mother's girlhood, was frustrating his plans and endangering his liberty. But as he looked down into her flower-like face he could not for the life of him dwell on this fact, nor care. "Come now, isn't it the nicest thing you know to sit and watch the moonlight upon the water?" he asked.

Through the perfume-laden summer air a familiar screech-owl hoot sounded a sudden note of warning.

"No, I don't want to do that," the girl said in her petulant way. Then clapping her hands together gleefully, she exclaimed: "I tell you what! *You* take me back to the ball. Won't Dolly just love the funny way we met!"

Denneth started at this suggestion, and then again a hoot of warning reached his ears, and recognizing its signal as meaning he must leave his present post because of danger ahead, he answered:

"Good! But I think some one may be coming——"

"Oh," the girl gasped in conventional alarm. "Then let's sneak out this side way. What would people say if they saw us!" and she ran lightly on tiptoe across the piazza, Denneth striding after her. Scampering down the steps, they were soon out of the grounds upon the village path.

Sam Simmons could be seen approaching; but as he caught sight of the small white figure by Denneth's side, and realized that the latter carried no "swag," he halted in amazement, while Denneth went strolling with his new companion in seeming indifference toward the beach and the hotel a-twinkle and a-tinkle with lights and music.

"Won't the old scrubby thing be jealous though!" Marjory Matthews dimpled up at the young man at her side. "And Mama! Oh!" and she tossed her

head. "But he *is* horrid, and I'm just not going to be worried to death!" Then after a pause: "But I guess after I tell mother who *you* are, she won't be so cross. She adores Dolly," and chattering on, the pretty little thing told her friend's "cousin," whom she thought she knew so well, all about the difficulties she was trying to meet in the best way her fluffy little mind knew how. She was a perfect slave to the whims and fancies of a scheming mother, and though she was worshipful and obedient, as she had been taught, the whole of her nature revolted at the idea of marrying the wealthy, but middle-aged bachelor, whom her luxury-loving and poverty-living parent had openly chosen for her.

Denneth Richardson was apparently listening very gravely, but all the time he was wondering desperately how in the world he could escape the brilliant lights of that fast-approaching ballroom! He thought with consternation of the situation in which he might find himself if he were introduced by his companion as Mr. Stevens. The Stevenses were among the most prominent of the colony, he knew; and if even Marjorie's mother should fail to recognize that he was not a member of that family, others, to whom he might be introduced, doubtless would. He thought, too, of poor Sam, who was waiting for him loyally, trusting implicitly in his superior judgment and eventual return to successfully accomplish their purpose. What should he do? Yet in spite of the seriousness of that question, he walked steadily on, smiling down at the girl by his side.

"It's a darling night!" she said, her moon-bathed face turned eagerly upward toward the sky. "Don't you simply worship dancing? I adore it. And Dolly says you can dance as wonderfully as you play football. You look as though you could!"

The boy flushed at her slightly veiled look of admiration, and a grim defiance, unequaled by any produced in him even by the most dangerous of his professional situations, entered his heart and made him resolve to go with her that evening wherever fate led, regardless of consequences. He could doubtless take care of himself. At this conclusion and the vague happiness it brought, he absent-mindedly slipped his long fingers through the opening in his shirt, seeking for his mother's locket. Then with a pang he remembered. For two years he had not worn it, not, in fact, since the first burglary he had committed outside of the his state. The leaving off of this beloved talisman was the one and only admission he had ever made to his own conscience that his life was other than all it should be. But now he realized what that very act had signified. He knew now that his palliative excuses were mere sophistry; that he had deliberately put his better nature aside. Then the thought came that he was unfit to be walking with this dainty girl so like his mother. She had taken him for another man, trusting him and believing him to be wholly honorable. In fairness to her he must leave her; and yet his heart rebelled—he would wait till they reached the hotel.

A robin, deceived by the brilliancy of the moonlight, roused and trilled a song. The trees meeting above their heads gently swayed, mottling the path with shadows. The air was heavy with the subtle perfume of sleeping flowers as the dew stole up and spangled them with moon-kissed jewels. The waves dashed booming against the rocky shore. He was free! Life had not been fair to him. He deserved the possible happiness that a new future might bring; and then and there, true to his impulsive nature, he determined he would become worthy to walk by this

girl's side! A revulsion of feeling against the past two years encompassed him and made him see them in their true light.

The girl's upturned face had by now taken on a dreamy look as whimsical as a small, imaginative child's. "The night-fairies have spread their shadow mantles clear across the sky," she said. "See, the baby-stars are wide awake and are winking and blinking at us." Then as a big green luna-moth flew past them: "And that's the Queen-of-Dreams, Free Fancy by name, who takes starlight dreams to all little children everywhere——" Then abruptly changing to her regular tone:

"Here we are at the hotel," as they reached the grove in front of that hostelry. "Doesn't it look cute all lit up?" and she tripped gaily in front of him through the trees toward the light and music, eager in her girlish gracefulness to join in the frolic from which she had run away only a little while before.

"There he is, right there!" she pointed excitedly, pausing on the steps and pointing through the open door. "That fat thing with the moustache, sitting like a lumdux in the corner."

As Denneth's gaze followed her pointing finger he saw two men rise and cross the ballroom, pausing in front of a tall dark girl, the acknowledged belle of the place. "Well, I wish you'd look at that!" Marjory exclaimed as the older man danced off with the girl. "And he pretending he never wants to go anywhere unless I'm along. Humph! Just like a man. Fickle things!"

Then whirling on Denneth she continued impulsively:

"Well, stupid, aren't you going to ask me to dance!" and she dimpled up at him impishly, then exclaimed: "Why, I didn't know you had white hair!"

"Wouldn't you rather stay out here and watch the water?" he asked, ignoring her evident amazement at her discovery. But he was so afraid of losing her that his tone was that of a very meek suggestion.

"No, I wouldn't," she said. "I want to dance! I'll just show him." Then remembering herself, she glanced up at Denneth coquettishly, murmuring gently: "I would just adore dancing with you, I know!"

Denneth again flushed with pleasure. Was he losing his reason entirely? he asked himself, recalling why he was in this seashore resort. In his mind's eye he saw Sam's astounded face watching him from the protection of the trees. Sam could be trusted, fortunately. He might think his partner's conduct was "nutty," "bug-house," but it would never occur to him to resent it or to doubt its ultimate good end for them both. Sam did not have that kind of an intellect. He had been made of clay that could so easily be molded that, had he but received the right influence in his childhood, he would have been as law abiding as he was now lawless.

Looking down at the lovely face upturned to his Denneth no longer hesitated, but at once led his companion into the dazzlingly brilliant, flower-decked ballroom, with its myriad-colored lights that smote his eyes cruelly. His daredeviltry and defiance flared. He would humor her, whatever happened!

"*You know I want to dance with you!*" he said in so serious a tone that the coquette in her was satisfied.

She dimpled again; then looking up at him in a puzzled way said: "It's funny, but I didn't know your hair was gray. It looks white in your pictures, of course, but I thought it was just blond." Then fearing lest she had seemed uncomplimentary, she hastened to say: "I think prematurely gray hair is darling!"

It's particularly cute with a young face, I think. I adore it, don't you?"

"But there's Mama beckoning to me as usual," she broke off to say. "I'll have to introduce you—and there *he* is with her, jealous old silly! What will he say! Come on!" and though Denneth's heart pounded with alarm, he followed the girl.

Mumbled and unintelligible words of introduction were soon over, and she had taken him away from the other two, saying: "Well, are we going to dance or do you still prefer to moon at the moon?"

Denneth was too overcome by happiness to even try to answer her. In fact, he seemed not to hear anything she had to say, but placing his arm about her guided her around the ballroom with a feeling of vague triumph.

She seemed as light as thistle-down in her rhythmical swaying in time with the music. Each moved in perfect accord with the other; but though Denneth's arm encircled her, guiding her skilfully through the maze of other dancers, with a sinking of his heart he realized that their lives were necessarily very far apart. The blackness of his prison experience flashed before him, seeming to drown her frivolous chatter. It made a picture of such sharp contrast that Denneth felt a glory now fill him. His mother's last words returned in what he thought must be a prophecy: "God is love, not vengeance. Life can be happy. Sunshine—flowers—love!"

On they danced. The past vanished. The present was glorious—must never end! He had never seen any one like her before! His heart seemed about to burst with its old-time hope and joy of living.

After several music-thrilled whirlings through a seventh heaven filled for him with fluffy blonde hair and uplifted blue eyes, Marjory stopped, and laugh-

ing, stepped out of his arms. "I'm all out of breath! Let's go to the grove," and she led the way from the ballroom, keeping up a gay chatter until, finding a seat beneath a wide-spreading oak, she imperiously commanded him to sit beside her.

The sea rolled in in great undulating waves upon a tiny strip of beach to be seen between the huge gray rocks of the shore; and as each wave succeeded each Denneth was taken back over the years to that night of his mother's death, when he had sat on the shore of his beloved bay and watched the tide come in. Once again his imaginative eyes saw, as they had then, the faces of sea-maidens who, lured by human lovers upon the shore, came eagerly to them—only to die.

He told the girl by his side something of his mother. Then he told her also of his own big bay and how this scene recalled his old-time fancies.

In big-eyed, childish interest she entered into his mood, first expressing a timid but real regret at his sorrow, and then, much to Denneth's delight, talking dreamily of her own imaginings as a child. There was a wistful pathos in her tones which made him wonder if she too had known unhappiness. Yet he could not conceive of such a thing, and banishing the thought he listened as she said:

"I've always believed in fairies—I mean the really truly fairies, not the Grimmy kind," and she continued to smile dreamily up at him, intuitively knowing that he would not laugh at her whims. "When I was a teeny weeny little thing I used to hunt for fairies all the time. One day I saw an old priest Bumble-bee marry a Prince and Princess Lily by carrying her a golden ball of pollen instead of a golden wedding ring! I saw happy spray fairies dancing in brooks. A storm for me meant that the sky fairies were having a battle, for

the thunder fairies' guns roared, and the lightning fairies flashed their swords of fire! In Grandma's garden way down in Virginia all sorts of flowers besides the lilies grew. The rain was the cloud fairies' tears, and after they had made the flowers grow the flowers' souls, once earth-bound, were freed and returned to the sky glorified to help make the rainbow."

Denneth sat erect and motionless, gazing at her. It all seemed too wonderful, too beautiful, to be true. The night, the nearness of her, her imaginings that were echoed by his—imaginings that he loved so well, yet had not dwelt upon for years! He did not know there were such girls as she; and with this thought the joy of beauty and youth with its aspirations was reborn in him, killing the old age that crime had made. Leaning over, he said softly, lest he break her dream-spell:

"Yes? Tell me more."

His voice aroused her, however, and the whimsical look left her face, to be as quickly replaced by one of Eve-old coquetry.

"Oh, dear, I know you think I'm awfully silly!" she said, looking at him from beneath her lashes. "Mama says I am, and I reckon she's right." Then a wistful expression succeeded the less attractive one upon her fine-featured little face. "Mama says I've grown up now and mustn't talk such foolishness; that men don't like it. And, of course, I must make men like me, to be *popular*. Mama says that's why Southern girls are so much more attractive than Northern girls." And then remembering the nativity of her companion, she said: "Oh, excuse me, I forgot. Somehow Dolly always seemed——"

But she got no further, for the unexpected change in her had affected Denneth strangely. Her words made him feel resentful, he knew not why. A feeling

of restless impatience, like that which used to fill him at his father's perverted outlook on life, filled him now, and so he said:

"Your mother is wrong. You're not silly. Such thoughts are beautiful, wonderful!" Then he flushed at his own words.

But pluming herself, the young girl, made experience-old by her mother's false ambition for her, coquettled and exclaimed: "Oh, Mr. Stevens!"

At the name, and at her changed manner, he frowned darkly. Then a gentleness toward her frailty and beauty again possessed him, quickly followed by his old defiance, ten-fold strengthened because of his deep and growing admiration for her in spite of her parent-imposed self-consciousness. She reminded him of his mother. He must be *to* her and *for* her only his very best self. He must not let even a thought of his father intrude itself upon his present state of mind. He must start right. Yet he reflected that to do so he must needs start with a lie—that, in fact, he *had* started with a lie. He inwardly cursed himself for ever having lived so that this was necessary! But ordinary self-preservation told him he must not give his rightful name. The past was unretrievable. There was no help for that now. Yet he would start anew as cleanly as he could. If it was possible, this girl by his side should make of him the man which his mother would have wished him to become.

"Miss Matthews," he said, "I am not Mr. Stevens. I'm sorry that you mistook me for him."

She gave a squeal of dismay, but unheeding he went manfully on. "In fact, you were not on the Stevens' piazza, you were on the one next door——"

"Then—then, who are you?" she broke in, breathing hard and speaking in a small, frightened voice. Her society manner and foolish little frivolities were

all gone now, and she looked, as Denneth thought, like a frightened, tired little child. He must protect her.

"I'm Denneth Richardson," he said. "And please don't feel embarrassed about this. It's all right." Then more seriously, fighting for his future, he said earnestly:

"Miss Matthews, I don't know Dolly Little. I never heard of you and you never heard of me until tonight. You know nothing about me except what I told you about my mother and my former home. But as God is my judge, I would rather know you, I would rather be your friend, than anything else in the world! I—I haven't had a very successful business—that is, I haven't *liked* the business I was in. But I'm going to find something else to do soon now, and—and—Won't you let me be your friend? I shall try to make myself worthy."

He was in deadly earnest, and Marjory Matthews, whose depth of nature was entirely unsuspected by either her pretty incompetent mother or her pretty incompetent self, felt strangely touched by the young man's earnest manliness. The very best in her responded instantly to the best in him; but true to her lifelong custom, she could not speak out honestly as he had spoken, but let the coquetry fostered and fed by her mother arise in her, causing a blushing silence which smote Denneth like a whip lash.

He rose. "I'm sorry if I have intruded," he said.

Then the true Marjory, the Marjory that the girl herself was destined not to know until suffering had taught her much, arose in her and she exclaimed: "No, no, don't go! I like you!" And then at this frank speech a feeling of timidity came over her, even before Denneth had seized her hand, which he impulsively did at that confession.

"Do you mean it?" he said, and she was surprised

at the intensity of his look, though she nodded and dimpled.

He dropped her hand. "Then excuse me a minute. I'll come right back," and he was off before she could stop him.

Giving the usual signal, he hurried past the lights of the hotel, and on to the rocks upon the ocean edge, while Sam Simmons, understanding the signal, followed eagerly.

"Whose cradle did you rob? Whose petticoat was it? Where'd you git the baby doll, in plain American?" he asked, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the girl.

"That will do for you," Denneth said in a tone that Sam had never heard him use before.

"But, Sonny——"

Denneth's hand was laid heavily on the other's shoulder. "Just wait until I explain matters a bit," and he went on talking earnestly; for as they walked further and further away from Marjory, Denneth found this sudden determination to desert his faithful partner would be no easy accomplishment, in view of their previous successful business relations together. He felt, nevertheless, that he must break away from such a partnership forever. He must make a future for himself—and, he hoped, perhaps for her.

Marjory sat waiting, dangling her small aristocratic feet and looking down at the rhinestone buckles as they flashed in the moonlight. A renewed loathing for the middle-aged suitor that her mother was trying to thrust upon her swept over her. She flushed. After all, *he* (looking toward Denneth's retreating figure) really was the most interesting man she had ever met. He had told her he lived in Hampton. Well, Hampton wasn't far away, and she and her mother were settled there by the sea for the summer——

"Marjie, my little love," a drawling voice broke in upon her thoughts, "what in the world are you doing here, child? Don't you know we have been looking everywhere for you?" and the speaker glanced toward the man by her side. "And what *would* people say if they saw you alone this way?"

"I'm not alone!" Marjory answered petulantly, jerking impatiently away from her mother's hand and looking off after Denneth's figure, now to be seen very faintly silhouetted against the moonlit water. Her every gesture plainly told the older man that for her he did not exist; and at the irritable indifference of her manner toward him a quick flush passed over his face, leaving it drawn and white.

"Not alone?" her mother repeated tartly, with difficulty controlling the sharp note that would come uppermost in her voice, while her stylish bosom heaved with the ladylike effort. "Well, who is the invisible Prince kneeling at your feet, I would just like to know, my love?" and she forced a laugh, though every line of her pretty young-old face showed her concealed rancor and irritation with the girl.

"Mr. Denneth Richardson has been with me, and will be with me again shortly," Marjory answered, continuing to gaze straight in front of her, while the toes of her slippers tapped the ground as she held her small head very erect.

"Denneth Richardson? Who in the world——"

"He's Dolly Little's friend, whom I introduced to you just now. Didn't you catch the name?" Marjory lied defiantly. Then for once in her life, losing all sense of dignity and respect for her mother in the real distress the forcing of Mr. Asquith's attention bred in her, she said in an impudent mimicry:

"He's handsome, his family is good, he has mon—I mean he is very eligible, my love, and altogether de-

sirable.’’ Then she remembered and checked herself. Not, however, before the man at her mother’s side had given Mrs. Matthews a sharp look, while that lady, too astonished and angered at her daughter’s evident rebellion to reply, stood stock still, glaring at her daughter. Then Marjory continued in a more submissive tone: ‘‘Yes, Mama, I know I’m horrid—I’ve shocked you both, but,’’ more desperately, ‘‘I can’t help it!’’ And choking back a sob she got up and walked away, leaving the couple standing beside the bench.

‘‘Mr. Asquith,’’ Mrs. Matthews almost wept in her angry distress, ‘‘I don’t know what Marjie means by such conduct, I really don’t. She must be ill—out of her head. I must take her to her room, the poor dear love! I don’t know *what* people would say if they knew of her conduct—’’

But Mr. Asquith, although pale, was very calm and said quietly: ‘‘I think I understand the situation better than you do, Mrs. Matthews. Pardon me, but if you leave us now I think I can make things all right—’’

‘‘But, Mr. Asquith,’’ the mother said as she nervously fingered the ultra-fashionable gown designed to recreate in her a girlish effect incommensurate with her years, ‘‘I hope you aren’t hurt. Marjie doesn’t mean anything. I’m perfectly sure! She really *is* in love with you—why, she couldn’t help being! She says so a dozen times a day.’’

‘‘Mrs. Matthews, I think you had better leave us. I must speak alone to Marjory.’’

‘‘But, Mr. Asquith,’’ Mrs. Matthews again broke in, sensing his fateful attitude and fighting desperately lest the anticipated comforts he, as her son-in-law, could give her would now be made impossible, ‘‘I *know* she is in love with you! Girls are such sensitive plants,

you know. The very delicacy and exquisiteness of their affection makes them shrink from any display of emotion. I beg that you do not speak harshly to my little flower. She—she— The poor little love is—”

“Madam, I again ask your pardon, but I must say good-night,” and turning on his heel he followed after Marjory, who had fled down the winding path through the grove toward the water.

“You little vixen!” Mrs. Matthews exclaimed angrily, her nostrils dilating as she looked after her daughter’s fleeing figure. “I’ll cure your airs. Just you see! The very idea! And when I’m moving heaven and earth to make you happy, too! Why the man can afford to buy us almost anything!” and she indignantly marched off toward the hotel, there to talk with other mothers about “her dear little love” and their entire devotion and congeniality.

Stanley Asquith’s legs carried him rapidly forward; but in his heart such a heaviness and hopelessness weighed that he was hardly conscious of any physical motion, and scarcely knew what he did or that he moved at all. With a bravery typical of his nature, one thought and one thought alone possessed him now. He must relieve the distress he had caused this girl to suffer, it mattered not at what cost to himself. He had been a blind fool—and cruel. He must make recompense. Catching up to her, he said in a quiet voice of command:

“Marjory, come back, dear. I must talk to you,” and he took her by the hand.

She fretfully pulled away and was about to speak when, putting one hand beneath her chin, he raised her head and forced her eyes to look up into his. The expression she saw there held her dumb.

“Do not say anything you will regret afterward,”

he cautioned her gently. "Come," and he took her hand.

So used was she to allowing his firm gentleness to control her that now she let him lead her back to the bench upon which she and Denneth had been sitting.

"Sit down," Mr. Asquith said, and she dropped limply to the seat, her eyes still fastened in a half-frightened stare upon his.

A spasm of pain crossed his face, but he quickly controlled it, and a look which lifted him above his middle-aged mediocrity illumined his eyes. "Marjory," he said, "give me your left hand."

The girl dazedly obeyed, and he quickly slipped the ring from the third finger and dropped it in his pocket. Then in a low voice he spoke, "It is all over, little girl. I've been mad. I've always known you didn't care; but I hoped I should make you care. To-night I saw you dancing with that handsome boy; I saw—But, no matter. You must be happy! If my love which makes me want to make you my wife distresses you, then in its place accept a love as big and—less selfish, perhaps. Real love must not give distress. My love *is* real, and I want to see you happy. Forgive me for ever being a blind fool. I realize everything now, and you're free. I shall always want to help make you happy in any way I can. Good night," and bending he touched his lips to her hair. "Little girl, little girl," he said brokenly; and then straightening up he strode briskly away.

For a moment Marjory sat looking stupidly at her vacant finger, and then with an unwonted depth of feeling jumped up and ran after the retreating figure.

"Stanley!" she called brokenly.

The man whirled about and stepped toward her, then stopped.

Marjory rushed straight on and flung her arms about

his neck, burying her head on his breast. For a moment a great hope filled him. His arms came eagerly forward and he started to draw her to him, and then instead gently pushed her away and looked down into her convulsed face.

"What is it, dear?" he asked gently. "Don't cry," as the tears overflowed her eyes. "What is it?" The hope in him would not be quelled, and yet he knew deep in his heart that things could never be any different from what they were.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" Marjory said, with little tearful gasps between each word. "I didn't know you were so good. I—do love you——"

His arms shot convulsively about her. She put her hands against his coat and burying her face in them sobbed: "But not that way, Stanley; not the way you love me. I'm awfully sorry! You're so good! Forgive me!"

His arms dropped; then raising one of his hands he lovingly stroked the hair back from her forehead, soothing her as gently as though she had been a child. She should not suffer.

A shadow fell across their path, and looking around Marjory saw Denneth's tall figure coming toward them. She stepped away from the other man, but not before Denneth's eyes had taken in and misunderstood the scene.

Without a word he turned away and disappeared among the trees, while Marjory, sobbing, ran toward the hotel. She was dreadfully sorry for Stanley, of course—dreadfully! But, oh, my goodness, what in the world *would* people say if any one besides Denneth had witnessed this scene! And Denneth— Oh, my goodness, what should she do! He *was* so handsome and fascinating—the most interesting man she had ever met! What in the world should she do!

CHAPTER X

STANLEY ASQUITH, his face half buried in his hands, sat upon the shore trying to forget; but instead he saw Marjory's dimpling, piquant face ever before him, her lithe, swaying body dancing among the shadows cast by overhanging trees on the inrolling water. With her image there always came, too, the handsome face of the young man as Stanley had seen him guiding her about the ballroom. Together they swayed and turned in perfect rapturous unison. Again he recalled the look in the eyes of both; a look he had never seen in Marjory's. There came to him also, as if from a mirror, his own image, stout, middle-aged, old enough for the girl's father. He held the two pictures before his mind's eye—himself and Marjory, and the young man and Marjory. Youth and middle-age seldom belonged together. He had undoubtedly done right in releasing her. It was the only honorable way, and yet——

Denneth's introduction to him again recurred to him. Denneth's face had fascinated him. There was an expression about it that had drawn him irresistibly, a something so vague he could not describe it, yet he felt it as a drawing of his nature toward that of the boy's. Not being a man to notice such things as a rule, or to be influenced by them, he marveled at this. He had been too busy all his life to make friends; but this young man's face haunted him. Where had he seen him before? As he gazed at the waves he recalled his own youth and its desperate struggle. He suspected that his present unhappiness might well have been avoided had he had an older man to help him to success while he was yet young. Was this young

man with his strangely pathetic, yet strong face having a like struggle? Had he fallen in love with little Marjory on sight, too? And what had the expression in her eyes meant? Restlessly he put these sentimental thoughts from him. He was a regular old woman matchmaker in his morbidness!

There reached him the harsh voices and loud guffaws of the hotel waiters at their early morning tasks. Impatient of their inopportune mirth, he got up and began pacing the shore, his mind still going back over the months he had known and loved Marjory Matthews.

Had she ever loved him—or was their engagement solely a scheme on her mother's part to gain the worldly comforts he could give her? He squared his chin at this thought, suspected several times before, and now knew it to be true. All his life he had put ambition before all else in the world. From a poor, unknown boy he had become a financial power in the state of his adoption; but in so doing youth and love had passed him by unnoticed until a few months before, when he had met this little Southern girl. Fool that he was, he had not realized then that it was too late! He deliberately recalled their companionship, letting every scene of the past happy months pass before him, reveling in the memory of that first evening when he had seen her, an exquisite will-o'-the-wisp, a wood nymph dancing and singing among the flowers of her grandmother's Southern garden. Yes, what he had done the evening before must surely be right; but it was hard! Yet the young man was of the right age for her. But what had become of him, he wondered for the first time. Where was he and who was he? He had not returned to Marjory as she had expected he would. He himself had led her back to her mother, excited and sobbing at the conclusion

of their fateful interview. Had the younger man returned, watched, and misunderstood the scene between himself and Marjory? If so, of course it was necessary that he should be disabused of his error. Marjory must have a fair chance of happiness—that is, if happiness lay in that boy's direction, as he, Stanley Asquith, thought likely. He walked on down the shore.

In the meantime Denneth Richardson had been tramping the woods, fighting as he had only fought during the night following his mother's death. It was true, he recalled, that Marjory Matthews during the first moments of their meeting had told him about this other man, but somehow he had not taken in the full import of that information, nor that she was actually engaged to him, until he experienced the shock of the scene he had intruded upon when he had sought to return to her. Long before that, however, in his characteristic impulsive way, he had planted her image in his heart in equal place with that of his mother. At bottom he was an idealist, not having lost that quality even during his worst moments when his father in him held sway; and now he knew that, having once met this beautiful girl, so suggestive to him of his mother, he could not go back to the life he had led the past two years without deliberately choosing to follow his evil nature, which he hated, yet which had grown to be as strong in him as his good. An old-time bitterness, prison nurtured, came to make the battle between the two even more hard. Life, he thought, while seeming to hold the cup of happiness to his lips, had in reality made him drink of a new disappointment. Should he go back to his life of crime? It was doubtless easier.

A squirrel ran out to the tip of the boughs beneath which he stood and, stopping there, scolded him ve-

hemently. The sun arose in a blush-hued sky as exquisite as the cheek of an awakening child, admonishing the birds to cease their morning song and take up the serious business of life. The dew fell away from the flowers, and they lifted their sleep-freshened faces to smile up at him. Everything was free. Should he, as free by birth as they, deliberately bind himself once more to crime and its ever-present consciousness of the danger of detection? His whole better nature revolted at the idea. His mother's face seemed to be before him. For the first time since his escape from the prison the full appreciation of the joy of the woods entered his heart. He was nature's freeman. Again he said to himself, as he had on that first day in the penitentiary, "The State may—and did—imprison my body, but my spirit it can never imprison!" He could live as he once before had planned; but this time no thought of his father should enter in to spoil his freedom. Surely there must be some place in the world for him other than that which he had been filling, did he but live as his best self dictated. He would secure an honest job somewhere. He would succeed! There came to him the memory of Judge Sawyer's face as it had looked on that day in Dunham, three years before. Though the judge had failed to keep his promise, nevertheless Denneth had often thought of him, and he felt in his present repentant mood that he would give much to have a man like the judge for his friend. If he cleaned his slate of crime and began life over again, this might be possible! At this thought his heart beat faster. He *would* try and, no matter what happened, he would go straight, too!

Reaching a slight moss-grown elevation beneath a low-boughed hemlock, he threw himself down upon it and lay looking up into the thick green of the forest world above him. The shade was ever grateful to his

eyes, for almost constantly the left one hurt and troubled him. He watched a flicker move round and round the limbs of a tree, his soft brown, black-dotted breast mingling with the shadows. All troubled thoughts fell away from him. A keen pleasure in the wild life he shared carried him back to the careless innocence of his early boyhood. It almost startled him when the flicker, deciding on flight, brought into relief its brilliant red nape, the yellow shafts of its wings, and the flashing white of tail patches, contrasting so conspicuously with its shadowy tones while at work. Very faintly, illusively, the smell of belated azaleas was borne on the breeze, to remind him poignantly of his mother. Absent-mindedly he reached for his locket.

With a flash of determination he jumped to his feet, scaring a robin that was hopping about. A man stepped out in front of him.

"Good morning," he said cordially. "You seem to be an early riser also."

Startled, Denneth did not answer, but stared at the man dumbly as he continued: "It's beautiful this time of the year in these woods. I am often reminded here of those of my boyhood."

Denneth caught himself just in time to keep from showing his agitation, and the other went on pleasantly: "I was born and brought up in the village of Barrington, next to the great seaport town of a couple of hundred or so inhabitants," and he smiled, "of Dunham-on-the-Coast. It seems we have a mutual friend in little Miss Matthews, who introduced us last night."

Yes, the boy was all he had been picturing him. Honest eyes, though rather disconcerting in their dauntless gaze, square chin, with proudly held head; lips slightly too thin and compressed perhaps, but—

well, he was worth the thing that he, Stanley Asquith, had decided to do. "And where are you from, if I may ask, Mr. Stevens?"

"Hampton," Denneth answered. And then went on: "But my name is Richardson, Mr. Asquith; Denneth Richardson, and not Stevens. Miss Matthews seemed to—er—get me slightly mixed with—er—another last evening on introducing us."

"Oh, I see," Mr. Asquith answered. "You and Miss Matthews have been friends some time, I presume?"

"No," Denneth said. "I had the pleasure of meeting her only last night."

The other man looked a little surprised at this, but continued: "I see. I suppose the fact that she said you were a friend of Dolly Little's gave me that impression."

Denneth darted a quick glance toward the man. What did it all mean? Why was he disposed to be so friendly. A pang of fear shot through him as it had never failed to do on the slightest provocation since his escape from prison. In fact it had often seemed to Denneth that that constant wearing apprehension, that never-ending watchfulness, tainted every breath of freedom he had drawn since. Was the man spying upon him, sounding him? Yet he, too, felt a strange, strong feeling of attraction to him, in spite of the fact that he stood in the way of his loving Marjory; and as he walked along listening to his talk, there arose in him a sense of confidence and perfect trust which no manner of arguing or jealousy could dispel. He was vaguely conscious of having seen him somewhere long before, but try as he would he could not recall when or where. He wondered if by chance he knew Judge Sawyer. He wondered—

"Yes, I came away from home when I was just a little older than you are. I—knew Miss Matthews's

father there. She seems almost like my daughter," he said, watching Denneth's start of relief at this explanation of the scene he had witnessed the night before. "I had a hard struggle getting work I wanted when I first went to Hampton. Plenty of work lying around for young fellows, but no future in it. I finally got located in a bank and—well, now I'm president of several. I have worked hard," and at the words the memory of his lost youth and love clouded his brow, but he continued: "I was very ambitious. Certain—situations in my youth made me determined to succeed in a worldly sense. I was half inclined to go into the ministry after I heard some of the scholarly men in the Hampton pulpits. I was brought up in the hell and damnation doctrine of a village, where, however, all sorts, of unacknowledged and untalked-of depths of sin prevailed, uncombated by the clergy because not recognized as within their province, and in Hampton I awoke for the first time to realize what God's ministers, in the broad sense of the word, could mean to the world. Love and not vengeance is their doctrine, and with sympathetic understanding and breadth of view they accomplish immeasurable good. But during that time I had not lost my dream of financial power. Somehow the desirability of that loomed very large, perhaps because of my past experience, and so I let the opportunity slip by. Then I felt that had I the talent I should like to go upon the stage; for after all the stage is our greatest vehicle for good if used in the proper way. I did not have the histrionic ability, however, and so I have just stuck to my job in the bank. For awhile I lost my ideals, more or less. But I have gotten them entirely back, thank God! Banking may not be so interesting, and sometimes it has seemed to me that I could not be of so much use in the world from such a post. But, after all, Mr. Rich-

ardson, I have now come to realize that there isn't a single place, it matters not how small or low, from which we cannot hold out a helping hand if we want to. People don't have to wait to be rich to be philanthropic. There is often more real philanthropy among those actually in need than there is from those who, in the world's estimation, can afford to give. In fact, I do not believe that giving is a matter of poverty or riches, but is a matter of the spirit.

"But I am preaching you a regular sermon, I fear," he broke off to say. "Do forgive me!" and Mr. Asquith smiled up at the tall young man at his side.

"The truth is young men and their futures interest me prodigiously. I didn't have much chance as a kid. Middle-age doesn't count for much, according to my way of thinking, except to help youth along. Clean, virile youth is every country's true strength, whether it recognizes that fact or not. Great and revolutionary thoughts have always been evolved from young minds —but here I am preaching again!" he said, once more interrupting himself. "You'll think me a terribly long-winded bore!" and he laughed.

Richard was held spellbound. What manner of man was this, he asked himself. In the old free days of his boyhood he and his mother had often discussed some such half-formed thoughts and ideals; but oh, how far away he had drifted since the agony of his prison hours! A few days ago he would not have believed there existed such a man as that with whom he now walked. Then like an unexpected peal of thunder the man's name, together with the whispers against his father's past which had sometimes reached him, crashed through his consciousness. Could such a thing be possible, he wondered? But instead of the loathing he would have expected himself to entertain toward the unacknowledged child of his father's sin,

he felt only redoubled admiration of the man. A feeling of loyalty and joy flooded through him. If what he suspected were true, and the same blood ran in their veins, was it not a wonderful thing that had come to him—this meeting with a splendid man, and discovering his relationship to him, unsuspected by the other! He was proud of this man who had worked himself up from obscurity to an enviable position in the world. He would have been glad to call him brother if circumstances had not been what they were. The whole situation seemed unreal. The man had continued talking, but for some minutes Denneth had heard nothing he said.

"What business are you in, Mr. Richardson?" Then with a whimsical smile, "And what business would you like to be in, for it seems the human lot, generally, for us not to be filling our own particular niches. Do you agree with me?" he asked, his words sounding to Denneth as though they were lines rehearsed from a play.

It was a queer feeling that possessed him, a crazy thought that perhaps the other part of his life had never happened after all. Also a vivid sense that he had indulged in this conversation a dozen times before with honest gentlemen who, had they even so much as suspected his past, would have turned him over to the police at once. But in spite of this he heard himself answering the man in a perfectly normal voice, while an intensely earnest desire to lead a good life possessed him.

"I would like to 'make good' just as you have, Mr. Asquith," he answered, looking him squarely in the eyes. "It doesn't matter how, just so it is honest."

"Banking ever appeal to you?" his companion asked, watching the play of expression across Denneth's sensitive face.

Denneth flushed. Again he had the feeling that it had all happened before; yet for the life of him he could not understand Mr. Asquith's interest in him. He knew no thought of their real relationship could have entered his mind with Denneth's changed looks and name. Besides, it was doubtful whether the man had ever seen him when as youth and small boy they had lived in adjoining villages. What was his real purpose in this conversation? Could it possibly be, as it seemed, solely to help him, a mere stranger? It really was entirely too extraordinary and preposterous! Yet their relationship undoubtedly had unconsciously drawn them to each other. At least, he felt absolutely sure now that the man was not trying to track him to earth!

He was reminded of impossible stories he had read, where a lone boy, for instance, cast adrift in a great city, all at once found he had a wealthy benefactor standing at his elbow—a benefactor who apparently had been doing nothing all his life but pine for the moment to come when he could step forward just in the nick of time, and save the poor but honest hero from a murderer's grave.

It was plain to him that the man by his side was, in the vernacular of Sam Simmons, no "sentimental highbrow," no social worker who did not understand what he was doing. Any one could see by his clean-cut look that he was a business man of the world who knew exactly what he was doing. Hateful as the memory of his father was to him, Denneth could imagine that he saw about him a certain look of aristocracy like his father's.

"Being mutual friends of Miss Matthews's friend, Miss Little—whom I know very slightly, by the way—I do not hesitate to say to you, Mr. Richardson, that I have a place in one of the banks I am connected

with which might suit you," Mr. Asquith was saying, "and I—"

Denneth was so overcome with surprise and gratitude that he did not even hear the rest of the sentence. His heart pounded and his old-time spirit of irresponsible joy so surged over him that every other emotion was swept from his consciousness. Could it be possible that luck had turned his way? It was hard to believe, and yet the courage and optimism which had kept him alive through all his prison punishment would not let him disbelieve it! He grasped at it as does a drowning man at a straw. No feeling of his dishonesty in passing for a friend of a girl he had never heard of until the evening before entered his head. He would have a place in the world! He would win Marjory and be a credit to her and to his little mother! Then after success had come and he had proved his worth he would tell his benefactor who he really was. The pupils of his eyes dilated until they almost covered the iris, and wheeling he grasped his companion by the hand.

"Do you mean it?" he said huskily, his face flushing and paling as he looked at the man keenly. "But you don't know anything about me. I might be—I might be—"

"I believe in trusting young men," and seeing Denneth's gratitude Stanley Asquith smiled and said nothing more, but walked on with him, letting the young man think the thing out in silence.

A chance for him, Denneth's thoughts ran. A criminal, a fugitive from State's Prison! A lump rose in his throat. Never once did it occur to him that his was a coward's part unless he told his whole story and let this man, after hearing it, judge as to whether he then wanted to help him or not. He knew that when he had entered the prison he was honest. He

felt his dishonesty since was excusable because of that terrible injustice done him. What was the use of running the risk of telling, he argued. Besides he had a *right* to this chance.

Not until years afterward did he realize the dishonesty of his present conduct. Self-preservation was strong in him. He did not know that the very path which he thought straight was made crooked at the outset by the cowardice to which he was now yielding. This trait of character he inherited from both parents—from his father the cowardice was of the more tangible form, physical, while the spiritual form was derived from his mother, that cowardice which had made her continue to be the wife of a man she had hated and feared. Women generally possess more courage to endure pain or suffering than men, for they were molded for the mother hour. But a cowardice of the spirit, born of ages of imposed dependence, is often theirs, and fearing to do without luxuries they stoop to mate with men as providers with no thought of the sanctity that should encompass that act; or, with no purpose of bearing children, enter into the marital relationship which God gave to His creatures as a thing sacred to people His earth with offspring in purity and love.

"It is not a very big position, Mr. Richardson," Denneth heard Mr. Asquith saying; "but as assistant receiving teller you will have an opportunity to learn something of our way of doing business. Later, perhaps—"

"Big position," Denneth almost shouted in his happiness. Then controlling his voice, he said: "It's the biggest thing any man ever did for me, Mr. Asquith. I haven't many friends, and—*no* relatives; and besides you know nothing about me! Some day I'll tell you all about myself."

He meant it then in his gratitude, entirely oblivious to the fraud involved in the present withholding of the confidence; but he honestly believed and, therefore, added: "In the meantime I shall make myself worthy of the trust you have put in me. I swear it," and too overcome with emotion to say more, he abruptly turned on his heel, and left his companion. The woods alone could understand his present joy.

"He seems like a fine young man," Stanley Asquith said as he watched Denneth's figure disappear among the trees. "It will be a real pleasure to me to help him toward success."

The early morning sun filtered through the leaves and began a flickering dance among the wild flowers at Denneth's feet. A bumble-bee, startled from a gold-hearted blossom growing in a spot where no tree cast its shade, buzzed about his ears, and then flew away toward the faint murmur of a far-away brook. A song sparrow called to its nesting mate. Bluejays flashed by, while the high-pitched, plaintive note of a pee-wee mingling with the gossipy song of the chickadee reached his gladdened ears. As he made his way through the fairyland of nodding woods, flower-strewn, he could hear the ever-increasing laughter of the little brook as it ran over its bed of stones toward the big rock, where its crystal water, clear as truth, fell in a sparkling cataract, dashing up rainbow-tinted spray which the sun turned to jewels set in lace. Denneth drew in his breath with pleasure.

"A penny for your thoughts!" a laughing voice said, apparently from out the blue-skied space above the laughing brook. "My, but you seem serious this morning!" and before he could even look about to see whence the merry tones came, Marjory Matthews jumped out from among the laurel bushes fringing the stream. Dimpling, she held out her hand in friendly

greeting. "Well, Mr. Dreamer, you don't have to say good-morning to me unless you want to," she added petulantly. "You can stand there all day like a stupid if you wish, and gap at the brook as though you had never seen one before; I don't care!" And pretending to start away, she flung back the words: "You're a rude thing, anyhow! You left me last night."

Denneth's pulses quickened and he hurried after her, all his former timidity gone and quite equal to cope with her eccentricities.

"Yes, and what did I see when——"

Then he broke off, sorry that he had spoken; for an evident change had come over the girl, and standing very still she looked up at him with hurt, startled eyes. She really had not known how much he had witnessed of the scene between Mr. Asquith and herself. He had turned from the path so quickly and with no indication of having seen anything that all through the troubled night she had half believed their figures, hers and Mr. Asquith's, had really failed to attract his attention in the darkness of the grove. She had fervently hoped so. Now she felt worried and puzzled.

"But—but I didn't mean anything by that." And then angered at herself for speaking so frankly to a comparative stranger, she continued tartly: "You have no right to speak to me this way anyhow!" Indignant tears sprang to her eyes.

Denneth was immediately chagrined and humbled, and said contritely, himself embarrassed by his unintentional boldness: "Of course I haven't. Forgive me." He felt so sure that the older man's affection for this girl was merely fatherly that he could think of nothing but her actual presence now. Her own only half-understood phrases uttered about him at their

meeting on the Stevenses' porch were entirely forgotten in his eagerness for her good will.

The flirt in her did not like this attitude in him, however, any more than she had liked his previous boldness; and so she said on purpose to hurt him, for the expression of his eyes was plain enough to read: "Well, of course, you know I am *engaged* to Mr. Asquith." Then the kindness of her real nature coming up she concluded aimlessly, "that is, I *was*."

Denneth frowned. He did not like nor admire these unexpected changes in her. He resented it fiercely whenever she became other than the dreamy little creature he liked to believe she was; the confiding child-woman who had admitted so frankly that she believed in fairies—"the really truly kind." He had seen her thus the night before in the grove where the waves seemed an accompaniment to her exquisitely modulated voice that had so thrilled him. Then she had fulfilled every ideal, both mentally and physically, that he had ever had of a woman. He did not want her to possess any other side. He hated the worldliness that sometimes peeped out from her innocent eyes. With true masculinity, he decided, without even knowing he did so, that she must be only the feminine perfection of gentle helplessness that he liked. At any thought of her being otherwise, he, the many-sided male, felt cheated and annoyed!

"Well, why don't you say something?" Marjory asked. "Didn't you hear me say that I was engaged to Stanley Asquith?"

He looked at her hard and steadily until in real confusion she dropped her eyes for a moment, and then recovering the self-possession years of teaching had given her to make her fit to battle against her world-old enemy, man, she glanced coquettishly up at him through her long lashes.

"There is nothing for me to say," he answered stolidly, though every drop of blood in his body tingled. "Except that in my estimation any woman who is lucky enough to be engaged or to have *been* engaged to Mr. Asquith is indeed fortunate."

This time she forgot her coquetry completely, and her eyes opened wide in childish amazement. "Why, what do you know about him? You only met him last night."

"I know this," Denneth answered; "he is the finest man I ever met."

Marjory's eyes opened wider than ever at this speech; but unheeding her, Denneth stooped forward and, clearing a big moss-grown rock at the foot of an ash, said firmly:

"Sit here, Miss Matthews," and reaching out for her hand he helped her to the rock.

For a moment the girl stood upon it, then turning upon him flared: "But suppose I don't want to?"

"You do want to," he said firmly, and stretched himself out at her feet.

She hesitated a second more; and then shrugging her shoulders, sat down. What was the use of trying to coquette with a man as stubborn as this one before her? She had never met any one like him. She didn't quite like his high-handedness, it is true, but—

"I want you to tell me more fairy stories like last night," he said abruptly. Then losing his masculine assurance he smiled up at her and begged like a small boy: "Please. They remind me of my mother's stories."

Marjory capitulated. "I was just fooling about Mr. Asquith."

"I knew that," Denneth said with disinterested assurance. "He told me he felt almost as if you were

his daughter. But tell me those stories!" and he settled himself back more comfortably.

Marjory's match-making mother would have indeed been horrified to see how little now remained of the girl who had been drilled into a Southern siren; for something in the boy's frank admiration of her made her forget that she was other than the little girl who had played with the fairies in her grandmother's garden.

"See those spray fairies dancing about that big rock," she asked dreamily, after a few minutes of silence, pointing toward the boulder which Denneth had noticed on his arrival, and over which the water dashed and foamed. "Well, that's the home of the water sprites; and the reason they are so happy is that they laugh and dance, it matters not how hard their tasks may be. That's the secret of true happiness they taught me when I was a little, little girl. Some day I'm going to write a book about it. Don't you think people who write books must be happy—really happy, I mean?"

Denneth looked at her sharply. Her cheeks were flushed, and the lids of her lovely eyes looked half swollen and reddened. He had noticed it when he first saw her there, and noticed also that her voice, though gay, had a note of pathos in it. Was she unhappy? There was no trace of unhappiness now. Yet something told him that her life did not have all of the happiness it seemed to have. The vain face of the pretty mother as he had seen it the evening before came before his mind's eye. Was that it? He sighed. He felt sure there was nothing between her and Stanley Asquith. Stanley Asquith had said so, and he trusted him. What was the meaning of the momentary flashes of pathos and appeal in Marjory's piquant face?

Marjory chattered on, telling her dainty fancies, and

he watched her, studying every expression of her ever-changing eyes. Life was very sweet and full of promise for him just then. The past seemed never to have been. His mother's last words sang through his brain. As always, he took the bit in his teeth, so to speak, and determined that he would wrest enough happiness from the future to make up for the past. Ideas meant action invariably with him; and so jumping to his feet he broke in upon her dreamy-voiced whimsies.

Looking steadily down at her, he said boldly:

"Marjory Matthews, Mr. Asquith offered me a place in his bank this morning. I accepted it. When I have made good—and I *am* going to make good—I'll ask you to marry me!" Then under his breath, so that she could not hear him, he said: "and you will, too. I know it, I feel it!" And before the truly astonished girl could so much as move he had marched off and left her.

Everywhere budding happiness reigned. The summer world was his—and hers! Snatches of Shelley came to him, and he recited them aloud as he and his mother used to do:

*The fountains mingle with the river,
And the rivers with the ocean;
The winds of heaven mix forever,
With sweet emotion—”*

Then breaking off, he jumped to the next stanza:

*“See the mountains kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;—”*

The song of birds, the perfume of flowers, the wild, free dashing of the waves upon the shore reached him. Throwing back his head, a blithesome whistle such as he had not known for years burst from his happy lips.

CHAPTER XI

THE orange-red and russet-brown of late September soon lost itself in flaming October, and then Thanksgiving snows began to fall. Summer was long dead. But in the hearts of Denneth and Marjory reigned a springtime that they thought unalterable. True to his word, Denneth had entered the employ of Stanley Asquith, quickly advancing from assistant receiving-teller to the position of receiving-teller itself, while Marjory, reinforced by Mr. Asquith's influence, had succeeded in overcoming her mother's threats and pleadings, and had married Denneth, the man she loved. The locket that Denneth's mother had given him now nestled against her soft white bosom, and a very modest ring encircled the finger that Stanley Asquith had deliberately yielded to the younger man. The words that made them one were said under the freedom of the arching trees, far away from the crowded city, for never could Denneth be quite so happy as when standing beneath the open sky, and Marjory welcomed his suggestion because of its romantic appeal.

An ideal honeymoon followed. Always afterward those weeks in camp were typified to Marjory by big fires, the homey smell of roasting chestnuts, glimpses of shy deer, the flash of the stray red fox, coveys of ruffed grouse, and the bob-white's call from the harvested fields, as flocks of ducks, head shot forward, swiftly crossed the autumn sky. Gray squirrels vied with the little bride in the practising of housewifely economies; and when she and Denneth returned from that honeymoon camp to enter upon their life in a small apartment awaiting them in Hampton, Marjory

thought there was only one possible blot upon her happiness—and she felt ashamed of that thought as soon as it entered her mind. Her mother was to live with them!

Months passed, and that lady, having been forced to accept the inevitable on the day of the wedding, which, according to her, should have been solemnized midst peacock-pluming women and the sound of paid musicians rather than beneath God's open sky filled with the song of birds, accomplished very little mischief. In fact, even she found it difficult to mar the perfect happiness of the boy and girl. For the first time in her life she discovered that it was well nigh impossible to grumble about lack of luxuries, so unresponsive were they to their need, and honestly tried in her injured dignity to accept her necessary home with them as graciously as was possible for one of her nature.

With Denneth's promotion in the bank, his pay increased; but the strain upon his eyes grew greater and they troubled him more and more. The strictest economy was necessary to maintain the little flat; and so he said and did nothing about the ever-increasing difficulty of seeing clearly. In spite of her mother's subtle hints to the contrary, Marjory felt that she and Denneth were blessed far beyond their kind. She was absolutely happy.

Thus a year passed. Mrs. Matthews, with a feeling of maternal duty well performed, had lavishly spent her full year's allowance in making Marjory outwardly the charming creature that the false ideals of our present fashion-god demand of a bride, leaving off nothing, in fact, except the spending of thought, advice and prayerful helpfulness with which a true mother trousseaus her mating daughter and prepares her to meet the real duties of life.

During that first winter and the following summer Denneth felt very proud of his exquisite, handsomely gowned little wife; and therefore, when he found Mrs. Matthews was taking Marjory about with her in that part of Hampton society which had opened a very small crack in its Westmoreland Street door to let these scions of Southern nobility peep at the grandeur of its sumptuousness, he did not complain, but spent long hours wondering how he could manage to make more money so that Marjory could shine in surroundings proper for such as she. He had long since come to believe, with many another young American husband, that women's luxuries are a necessity.

The time had now come when Marjory's smart frocks of the year before began to look less smart; and desiring to replenish them, she came to realize that Denneth's bank account was painfully limited. "What would people say," her mother's bogey always, once more dominated her thoughts! Besides her mother constantly reminded her of the might-have-beens, until Marjory's happy eyes were soon critical of all that was hers, and her face clouded instead of smiled when her husband came home. She had made some friends among Hampton's wealthy girls and young matrons; and now, aided and abetted by complaints from Mrs. Matthews, she grew more and more resentfully conscious of her lack of luxuries, and of Denneth's financial shortcomings. In the passage of a whole year, she thought over and over to herself, he certainly *should* have managed to do better than he had done. The other married girls she knew had twice as much as she! The little apartment, once bright with the shine of brand-new wedding presents, now took on a small and shabby look. These facts Mrs. Matthews often hinted none too gently to her son-in-law. The sunshine that had promised so much

for the couple a little while before was dimmed, and the clouds began to thicken.

Since their marriage Stanley Asquith had been a more or less frequent visitor in the little home, for Marjory's and Denneth's happiness meant much to his lonely heart. They openly recognized him as the person who had brought them together; and in consequence made him feel more welcome in their tiny rooms than he had ever felt anywhere else. Denneth was more sure of their unacknowledged kinship each day, and each day that he slowly climbed the ladder of success in the bank he resolved to tell Mr. Asquith his entire history. But each day courage failed him. So burned and scarred into the soul of a convict are his stripes, that if he ever again is counted of moment by the unsuspecting world, he would rather die than voluntarily admit his past! And this Denneth had begun to feel. Yet, he argued, those who have suffered physical sickness and have been committed to a hospital do not hesitate to speak of the fact. They receive sympathy, not condemnation. Again his old arguments, indulged in in prison, returned to embitter his mind, and he found he was weakening in his resolve to tell his story. Moreover, his eyes grew more dim, though with no outward sign of their failing, and he dreaded the day which he felt would surely come when he could be of no further use to this man who had so befriended him. Yet tell him he simply must! The fact that he had for so long deceived him tormented him, and he now began to realize that he could know no peace until he stood before him in his true light. He feared that the disclosure of his criminal past might rob him of Stanley Asquith's friendship. He felt positive that by this disclosure he would forfeit his position in the bank. For Marjory's sake, therefore, he hated to do it; but, in true keeping with

his better nature, it had grown impossible for him longer to practice deception upon this man.

So going into Stanley's private office early one morning he closed the door and, facing him, he said, in a voice which he strove hard to make natural:

"Mr. Asquith, I've come to tell you something."

"Yes, Denneth," Stanley Asquith said, busily writing, only glancing up long enough to nod.

"I have been deceiving you for nearly a year! Do you see these?" and he touched his thickened glasses, while his voice broke in spite of his endeavor to control it. "I have to wear these because of eight months spent in an underground cell as a convict in State's Prison," and then pouring from his lips there came in a torrent of self-abnegation the whole of his miserable story—all that had gone before his imprisonment, and that which had followed.

Stanley Asquith sat dumb, his lips tightly compressed. Bitter and grievous disappointment filled his heart. He could not speak. Denneth had deceived him—had not trusted him enough to disclose to him his past. Denneth, whom he had thought so manly, was a coward and distinctly unmanly! He had accepted his friendship and aid, had even married little Marjory, without confiding to him his secret. In all his life Stanley had never been so bitterly disappointed in any one!

Denneth had ceased speaking, and standing before him waited in dread for his verdict. With every bit of love and loyalty in his affectionate nature he longed to say something to show this man how he felt toward him. Even now for his sake he had purposely withheld his real name; nor did he let slip anything about his father which might give Stanley a clue as to their relationship. Partly through loyalty to his mother and partly because he did not want to cause this man

any further pain or embarrassment, he thought it best not to impart to him his discovery. Yet he earnestly wished to tell him everything and to claim him as his brother.

Stanley still sat silent, no words as yet having passed his lips. He must not be hasty, he thought. In no way must he convey to this young man the idea that he did not trust him now just as much and as readily as he had before. He believed that no man can be really helped unless he is trusted implicitly by his helper. Denneth Richardson was a splendid young fellow. In spite of his past, he would succeed; his ability and conscientious work in the bank had proved that possibility beyond a doubt. Yet he had deceived him—

Slowly Denneth's face had been growing white, and as Stanley Asquith's unbroken silence continued, a look of hurt had at first passed over it which seemed to blot out all its virility; then throwing his head back his features hardened, his eyes darted defiance. The man he had thought was his friend was evidently like all the rest of the world. He could not understand or forgive him. Well, there was only one thing to do under the circumstances.

"Of course I offer you my resignation. No bank president cares to trust an ex-convict," and into his voice there had stolen the old bitterness. Then without even glancing toward his friend he opened the door and left the room.

Stanley Asquith jumped up. "Denneth!" he called, striding to the door. Into his tone he managed to throw all the love and respect which had been growing in his heart for the young man ever since the first night of their meeting. "Come back!"

Denneth slowly turned an astonished face toward him, then without speaking followed Stanley back

into the office. Stanley closed the door, and with his back against it, faced him.

"Do not think," he said, speaking slowly and choosing each word with care, "that what you have told me will make any difference. It will not. I trust you."

Quick tears sprang to Denneth's eyes, and his very soul was displayed in the loyalty of his gaze as he looked at the other man.

"It is the fact that you did not tell me before that makes the difference."

Denneth winced, opened his lips to speak, and then only stared as Stanley went on:

"You should not have deceived me. I trusted you and you should have trusted me. When I offered you employment I was entitled to know then what you have now told me. I think, though, I understand better than you suspect the strength of the temptation to which you yielded; and now that you have told me—well," and he laid his hand upon Denneth's shoulder, "the best thing for both of us is to forget the past and start all over again. My boy, your position in the bank is yours as long as you want it and live as you have lived since I have known you."

Then before Denneth could control his emotion sufficiently to speak, Stanley asked abruptly:

"Does Marjory know what you have told me?"

Again self-loathing gripped Denneth.

How keenly he felt the cowardice of his action in marrying her without first disclosing his past. For a long time he had reproached himself for it! If only there was something he might do by way of atonement; yet he knew there was nothing he could ever do that could remedy the wrong done her. It was as irrevocable as were his past crimes. He shook his head.

"No, she knows nothing," he answered.

To his surprise, Stanley heaved a sigh of relief, but quickly said: "Of course, you realize how reprehensible such deception is?"

Denneth nodded in silent distress.

"Nevertheless, knowing and loving little Marjory as I do, I think it would be better now that you never tell her!"

"But, Mr. Asquith," Denneth broke in——

"Yes, I know what you want to say; but it's too late now. It would distress her and do no good; and as to yourself, it would be selfish to tell her for the mere satisfying of your own awakened conscience. You have told me. That is enough. Let it stop there." Then looking Denneth deep in the eyes, he said impressively:

"I believe it is in you to make her so good and true a husband—to become so good and true a man yourself—that this past of which you have told me will count for little in comparison with the rest of your life. It is futures, not pasts, that I believe in, Denneth, and the future awaits you to make of it *exactly what you choose!* So go back to your work—and forget everything else."

With a conscience lighter than it had been for many months Denneth now felt that the troubles in his little home must surely disappear too. But in spite of this hopeful feeling, and his constant endeavors to make Marjory happy, day by day things grew more dark. Then one day the impossible happened! He and Marjory quarreled. She had asked him for more than he could possibly give her—his eyes had been particularly painful that day—and Mrs. Matthews, throwing herself into the breach, in cruelly chosen words declined to believe that he was unable to give her "delicately nurtured flower—her dear little love—

life's necessary luxuries! What did he suppose people were saying, anyway, about the economical way in which he made them live!"

From that time on more complaints than loving words filled Denneth's ears at the morning and evening hours, and though often a penitent, moist Marjory crawled up into his arms to "bawl her eyes out because she had been unreasonable—even if other girls *did* have all the pretty things and she had none," he began to dread his homecoming. Tired and discouraged, he wondered whether it could be his fault?

Ever the dimness grew in his vision and troubled him sorely. He must see an oculist, he decided anew each day. Yet at the thought of it a fear possessed him, a dark feeling of premonition.

Finally, after just such a scene of weeping wife and meddlesome mother-in-law, when he had at last consulted an oculist who gave him very bad news indeed, a doctor had to be called in to Marjory. Hysterically she told him of how ill she felt, and learned from the professional lips that the brightest crown of womanhood was to be hers in six months or so!

On hearing the news Denneth's soul bowed in awe before her. Never in his life had he felt so reverent of all things, so worshipful of the ways of his Maker! Fortunately he had withheld the news of the rapid failing of his eyes, caused, as the oculist told him, by atrophy of the optic nerve; and now, elated at the thought of the coming happiness, he forgot the worry of it all and what it would mean in connection with his future. His heart soared!

He tried to gather little Marjory up in his arms; but flinging away from him she said things that made him aware that she did not feel as he did about this wondrous promise for their future. It was a horrible, sickening shock to him! In his idealism and

right thinking, which had been wrought in him partly because of his knowledge of the creatures of the wild, uncontaminated by man and his domestic beasts, Denneth could not bring himself to believe that any woman willing to be wife would be unwilling to be mother.

Sobbing, Marjory threw herself into her mother's arms, and there held close, listened while this worldly matron sympathized with her, openly complaining that "The dear little love needed new clothes and a decent place to live in, and now this bad luck had befallen her! No wonder people were talking!"

Petrified, dumb, shocked beyond all words, Denneth saw his idol crash to earth before him, and realized that for Marjory at least the consummation of their union had not been sanctified by the sacred trust that God had reposed in them for the sake of posterity.

Without a word he went from Marjory's foolish, lacy-pink boudoir and left the house. The night was stormy. Great ominous clouds banked themselves in the east and hid the moon. His head ached. His poor eyes smarted. His hands rammed deep into his pockets, his hat jambled down over his eyes, he strode recklessly on. Hardly had he rounded the corner when a man, running, bumped into him, then seeing who he was, gasped out:

"Oh, Mr. Richardson, excuse me, sir, but 'e's unconscious, sir. I fetched a doctor in, but 'e said to tell you to come," and the deliverer of this message dropped respectfully behind, while with many questions Denneth hurried on to the apartment where Stanley Asquith lay ill.

It seemed to Denneth that the world was surely coming to an end! The night was so black that save for the feel of the fresh air on his cheeks and the occasional lights of the streets he might have been back

in his underground cell. He shivered with the recollection which until lately had been almost erased from his mind.

Anxiously he opened the door of Mr. Asquith's room; but too late. Death had entered first.

Stanley Asquith, taken with a heart attack caused by a chronic condition which had existed for many years, lay very still and white upon the bed, his lips parted in a benevolent smile that lent to his face a look of "light past all understanding."

The next day the news of his sudden death startled the whole city of Hampton, and for the few days before he was forgotten it mourned. This man with a spirit that feared no one and believed that every one, if given a fair chance, had his share of good as well as of bad, had become much beloved in that city.

The bank in which Denneth worked soon changed hands, and under the management of the new régime he felt constrained and ill at ease. Each day now he went to the oculist, who gave him more and more alarming news. However, conditions in his little flat had slightly improved; and though Mrs. Matthews and Marjory both talked in what was, according to his ideas at least, a flippant way about the event to come, Marjory was now more like her girlish self. But when an idol has been rudely torn from its pedestal it can never attain the same heights again; and so, though Denneth forgave her the scene which had so shocked and embittered him, even excusing it because of her youth and frivolous mind, there was, nevertheless, a not-to-be-forgotten barrier between them. He knew that it was her lack of training to look at life from a high plane that had made her act as she did; but even now her attitude caused Denneth much unhappiness, for she resorted more and more to her mother's companionship, that lady seeming to have

regained the old ascendancy over her. Manlike, he was unable to stand up against their attack upon him. In weakness, which he termed devotion, he thought now only of the pain through which his little wife must needs pass to give him the son he longed for; and under the influence of this thought he could deny her nothing. He deliberately turned his back upon prudence, generously and recklessly responded to their call for more money to spend, and ever hoped, in his masculine ignorance, that things would become more normal and that the extra expenses would stop after the first few months were over. Too, though Marjory had disappointed him, he loved her with every fiber of his being; and though he knew now that she was not as perfect as he had at first thought, he nevertheless, in spite of this knowledge, endowed her with every grace which his idealistic nature could conceive.

Giving no thought to the welfare of the precious soul which was about to come into the world, Marjory and her light-minded mother spent their time planning for the bedecking of its little body. Frills and soft laces, hand-seams and daintiness upon the tiny garments, took up their whole attention. Many women sew only love into such things, and thereby make them beautiful offerings of motherhood. But not so Marjory and her mother. Their whole idea was that of the unalloyed vanity which had always filled Mrs. Matthews's life. Marjory was determined that her baby should be as well dressed as her friends' babies! No thought of the sacredness of God's gift to her ever once entered her mind, but like so many other young mothers she thought solely of the material side of it all. She wholly failed to appreciate how her thoughts might be making their impression upon the plastic little brain now forming; nor did she realize that if she dwelt on high and noble things she would be helping

to prepare her child to meet the struggles and temptations that must be met by all earth-bound souls.

When a seed sown among shadows and thorns with no sun to bless it and make it flower into perfect beauty grows up into a weak, stunted plant, we, as gardeners, are not surprised. We do not blame the plant. But when earthly soul-seeds grow into dwarfed maturity because they have not received the sun of prenatal love, we are apt to blame fate—not the parents who have planted this precious seed and allowed it to develop in the shadows of thoughtlessness. Thus do we continually wait later than is necessary to help the race onward.

Denneth saw less and less of his wife as the weeks went by, for she and her mother were always discussing things "a mere man couldn't possibly understand." They selfishly walled him out of their lives, thoughtlessly making of Marjory's condition an excuse to leave him lonely.

It was just at this juncture that Denneth's former partner Sam Simmons showed up, much the worse for wear. His "old gal" had died, and he had had to "tie the kids' hoofs and express them to the cold storage" (meaning the Industrial Home). Sam, with no good influences at work, had then resorted to his treacherous friend the "jag jug" for comfort and strength. Glad of a chance to help this fellow, who, in spite of his dishonesty, was an honest friend, Denneth secured him lodgings, and made him promise to sober up and go to work. Besides, though Denneth did not admit it to himself, their secret companionship which followed was a source of pleasure in his lonely life, for he believed Sam possessed more good than evil in his make-up.

True to his ability to follow his leader, Sam had shown Denneth his gratitude by keeping his job and

"walking the heavenly tight rope," as he expressed it.

During all this time Denneth's eyes were growing steadily worse. He longed to tell Marjory about it, longed to take her in his arms and tell her all—his past as well as his present. The strength of her love would mean so much of comfort to him. But though several times he started to do so, he either felt that in her present mood the sympathy he craved would not be forthcoming, and so once more deferred his revelations, which in any event must be a shock to her, or oftener still her mother would come in to upset things. So after a slight struggle with his conscience he let the matter drop with an ever-present sinking of his heart and a feeling of utter uselessness.

The men under whom he now worked in the bank had no personal interest in him, and he felt ever more keenly the great loss of Stanley Asquith's friendship. A loneliness began to settle down upon him, broken only by his occasional glimpse of Sam, who he often thought was the only person who really loved him for himself. The old bitterness against life and its injustice returned.

To make matters worse, Marjory and her mother were daily growing more unreasonable. Weeping and wailing, Marjory often flung herself into her mother's arms and, accusing him of not caring, not *trying* to make money enough to give her what she needed in her present condition, drove him in despair from the little flat to take refuge in Sam Simmons's company. Her desire for luxuries had grown amazingly the last few months. It was insatiable—had become an obsession with her; and her mother, being by nature a parasite, had felt pleased to see Marjory "standing up for her rights!"

One spring morning, when a whiff of budding things had heartened him a little, he received a new and

crushing blow. Marjory's pouting, spoiled face had been turned away from him as he attempted to kiss her good-bye before leaving for business! Hurt far beyond words, he left in silence and went to see the oculist. That gentleman, in a pleasant, conversational tone that often covers deep feeling in such men as he, told Denneth that his left eye would live less than six months, and that the right one was in danger unless given the most careful attention.

After hearing this news Denneth walked on in a daze to the bank, and entering his cage shut his door, vaguely wondering what he could do to provide for Marjory's future.

That very morning the bank had acquired, through its new president, a number of large corporation deposits. The money had arrived in big bundles of bills. Throughout that entire day as he sat counting this money he longed as he had never longed before to give Marjory everything she craved.

Finally, when the counting and sorting was done, and his assistant had gone home, his eyes glued themselves on the packages of bills stacked so temptingly about him. Banking hours were over, and he was entirely alone in his high-ceilinged gilt cage.

Marjory's face smiled. She held out her arms to him, she pleaded for the material good things of life! And then suddenly his difficulties seemed all over forever. What did it matter if he *did* abuse his trust? What did his resolution to "go straight" matter in comparison with Marjory's comfort and happiness! Her happiness was far more important than anything else! If the oculist was correct, he would soon be useless anyway. He ground his teeth together at the reflection that his present and future suffering were caused by the injustice of the law. His old bitter determination to get even again assailed him, brought

on this time by his desire to please Marjory. His fingers went out toward the bills.

At this Marjory's face seemed to come closer to his, rosy and happy. She was all dimples. Her eyes had lost their tired look, and she smiled at him just as she had smiled during that first summer among the flowering woods. He saw her surrounded by comforts and luxuries that seemed fitting to her dainty beauty—

Quickly he slipped several bills of a very large denomination from the middle of the bundle just beneath his hand, and in their place substituted an equally thick package of smaller ones. This accomplished, he gathered up the bundles, summoned a clerk from another department to go with him, and they put the money into the safe and Denneth left the bank.

That evening there was great rejoicing in the little flat. He had had a raise in salary! Many eagles in the form of roses and such luxuries were screaming his guilt at him from every point toward which he looked; but, smiling and happy, Marjory cuddled up in his arms, the locket of queer design swinging happily upon her neck. Too, another blessing came to Denneth as if summoned up by his determination to wrest some small moments of happiness from fate before the curtain of eternal night descended upon him. That very day his mother-in-law had been called away from him and her "dear little love" by a tobacco-cuddled magistrate of the Southern town where she had lived. Between chews this active gentleman-of-leisure had shown one of the Matthews's aristocratic, but stony, billy-goat-recreation fields, to a shrewd mining engineer. The expert suspected that minerals in paying quantities held squatters' rights superior to the goats', and so Mrs. Matthews, with the air of millions already hers, had majestically flown to the spot and

left Denneth alone with Marjory for the first time since their honeymoon.

For Marjory the flat was once more a blissful bower because of her self-satisfied happiness, believing as she did that the bills Denneth had given her were the result of his added affluence. But for Denneth a mountainous cloud, black with memory and blacker still with apprehension of what the future held for him, overshadowed everything. The soft spring air which blew in at their windows turned him sick, for in sharp contrast his imagination caused him to smell anew the deadly stale stench of his old underground cell. The bright lights of the little sitting-room smote upon his sight, and closing his eyes he shuddered as the oculist's words screamed their way through his brain, accompanied by the undercurrent of Marjory's light, inconsequential tones. Yet he held her close in his arms—and waited.

Then with a flash he saw clearly that there was an easier way. His muscles tensed themselves momentarily at the thought. He smiled bitterly. It were better so.

CHAPTER XII

DOWN a small, crooked street of one of Hampton's poorer districts Denneth walked briskly, peering up at the numbers on the doors of the dilapidated lodging houses, which, as colonial mansions, had housed many heroes of Revolutionary days. Finally he entered an unpainted doorway and climbed the rickety, dim-lit stairs.

Giving his usual signal of three gentle taps followed by a knock upon the door at the end of the hall, it opened wide enough for him to see Sam Simmons's face peering out at him; and pushing it further open, Denneth entered.

"Gee, pal," Sam exclaimed, "it's glad my sky-blue optics is to peep you! . But say," and he shoved forward the remains of a chair, "I'm thankful, I am, that I ain't a giraffe. Law man! I'm thirsty a mile deep, believe me! Can't I pull the cork—blow the foam—take a swig, in plain American? A reservoir gone dry ain't in it with yours truly! Just one little tee-totaller palate washer, pal," he begged like a hungry child.

"No," Denneth said shortly. "You know as well as I do that one drink for you means that you would soon 'be like the bed of the deep-blue sea for the amount of liquid in you,' in your own words. Besides, I've got an important job for you."

"But I've lost my taste for jobs, pal," Sam broke in dejectedly. "I've worked so hard and honest since you piped me here that I feel like me mother wuz a society dude and me father an employment bureau, believe me! There ain't no high spots—no Ferris wheels—no lofty views—no excitement in life," he

translated himself, "since me poor remains was picked up by the water wagon and I become the victim of honest labor."

"But this job is for *me*, and it isn't— Well, in your language, old man, it isn't exactly what you would call 'passing the hat for foreign missions'!"

"What!" Sam said, losing his dejected slouch and sitting bolt upright in his interest. "You ain't busted away from the mothers' meetin'—left the fold of the innocent lambs—cooked up something that a real man finds no cinch, have you?"

"Yes," Denneth answered desperately.

"Thank Gawd!" Sam burst out with a sense of real gratitude as he hitched his chair forward nearer that of his friend. "Unmuzzle, Sonny—turn on your music box, uncoil your fire hose—spit out your news, in plain American," he said in excited interest.

For a moment Denneth Richardson tramped the floor, his brows drawn together in a deep frown. Suddenly the flame-like zig-zags shot up bewilderingly before his eyes and he put his hand over them, steadying himself against the wall. The oculist had told him that the sight of his left eye would leave him absolutely some day after one of these attacks; and Denneth felt now, in the horror of his pain-stabbing agony, that the time had doubtless come.

Removing his hand, however, he discovered Sam's smelling lamp was still faintly aglow for him, and knew that the worst had not yet happened.

"It's this way, Sam," he said dully, the weeks of misery that Marjory and her mother had caused him making him feel now as if all emotion was over for him forever, "I can't make it, old man! my—my——"

He wanted desperately to tell Sam about his eyes, but somehow he could not speak of that terror to any one. It is characteristic of those who are soon to be

prisoners in the Land of Eternal Night that they will not voluntarily admit the fact; and so he broke off to continue along another line.

"Well, I just can't make it, that's all, old man. I have fallen down—failed."

Sam waited silently for the story he felt was forthcoming, but Denneth was buried in thought, and for several moments said nothing. It was hard to tell Sam. Somehow the thing he had done, wrong though he knew it to be, seemed almost right in the distorted light of his mental and physical suffering; and the knowledge that had he not done it he would have lived only to become a burden to Marjory, seemed to him largely to excuse it. His unborn son would be better off with money enough for support and without a blind father, he had argued. He felt no remorse because of his theft; and yet he hated to tell Sam of it. He had hoped to make a better man of Sam, and here he was deliberately pulling him, as well as himself, down again!

After Marjory's satisfied caresses of the evening on which he had given her evidence of his improved circumstances Denneth had left her, saying his increased responsibility in the bank made it necessary for him to be there; and taking the trolley to the city's outskirts he had tramped the woods as was his custom when under mental stress, trying to fight the thing out, yet persuaded in his innermost consciousness that he had done the only thing he could do under the circumstances, never really doubting that he would see the thing through exactly as he had planned.

The next day he had worked all day at the bank; but his thoughts were ever busy planning how he could keep the money safe for Marjory and her child. It was during these hours that he thought out and wrote the note he would leave for her. By wire he ar-

ranged for her room in one of the best of New York's private hospitals. She should be safe from the news and far from the place of his disgrace—his little son should never know the kind of father he had had. To the last detail Denneth Richardson worked out his plan for the protection of these two he loved, and explained it all to Marjory in an affectionate note which bore not one trace of his suffering or distress.

Sam, he decided, was the only one to whom he could trust the sacred commission of attending to the money and delivering the note. Of course the sooner he saw Sam, then disappeared, the better. Any moment now his theft might be discovered. Yet, try as he would, he could not but long for and take more happy hours with Marjory; and so he kept putting the matter off. Finally, however, the day came which he knew must be his last at home. Clinging to Marjory he told her good-bye, explaining his going as a business trip of a few days' duration; so that when he left the bank the following evening he did not go home at all, but had gone straight to Sam's dilapidated lodgings. He admitted freely to himself now as he walked up and down before his rough companion, that his theft of the bills had proved his real cowardice beyond question. He knew deep down in his heart that it was pure, unadulterated weakness on his part to have taken the money; and yet somehow the admission of cowardice did not trouble him. He simply accepted it as he had accepted all the other unpleasant features of his unhappy life. Of course, if he had had his choice in the matter, his reason argued, he would not have chosen cowardice in any form as a trait of his character; but the days of his father's tyranny, and the unfair days of his torment in prison, had been his only training to fit him for a life that had proven too hard for him. He consoled himself with the thought

that he was not responsible for the error of his course, or for the character that made possible that course—that what he was was the result of influences beyond his control.

What was the use of the struggle he had made, anyway? What was the use of anything? he thought bitterly. The recollection of Marjory's smiles came to mock him. When he could give, she smiled. When he could not give, she frowned. Love? Had she truly loved him? Was she capable of true love? Often of late he had asked himself that. Yet never had he questioned the strength of his own love, nor suspected the foundation of quicksand on which it rested. His love for her had put him where he was now, and had led him to wrong her so grievously, while he conceived he was sacrificing himself for her greater happiness; for even though love be pure and high, it may sometimes, when not grounded on strength of character itself based on high moral conviction, lead to acts that are the opposite.

Sam stirred restlessly; but unheeding him Denneth continued silently thinking the thing out for the hundredth time. The sum of money he had been able to take unnoticed from the bank was large. It might not seem so to many men, but to him who had known only comparative comforts it seemed big indeed. Certainly it ought to be sufficient to keep Marjory and her child in the fair amount of comfort that she was used to for many years to come. Anyway, it was the best he had been able to do for them.

He tried to look at the other side of the argument; but could not see anything save the fact that he had done the very best thing possible. Had he not stolen this money—with his eyes predicted to fail within a year—there would have been nothing for Marjory! Yes, he had certainly done wisely.

Whether by that act he had lost in self-respect more than he had gained mattered not. *They* were provided for. But he must tell Sam Simmons what he had come to tell him. He needed Sam's help in the matter. So bracing himself, he sat down and, leaning toward his friend, said earnestly:

"Sam, I've fallen down—failed, as I told you. And now I've come to ask you to help me. Are you willing, old man?"

"Am I willing?" Sam repeated almost before the other had ceased speaking. "Whatter yer take me fer to ask that question?" he said indignantly. "Do you think I'm a female tired of her part of the bargain and headed for Reno—a hen too rovin' by nature to set on her eggs—a bear desertin' of her cubs—a white-livered skunk, in plain American? What are you hintin' at, anyhow, when you ask if I am willin' to help *you*? Ain't I often proved to you that you are my tootsey-wootsey, so to speak, my only valentine—the best pal I've got in the world? Lord, Sonny, 'course I'll help you," and he choked in his earnest expressions of loyalty. Then clearing his throat to hide his emotion, he exclaimed gruffly: "Spit out your cud! Tell me all about it!"

"Well, Sam, I've robbed my bank of this," and he threw two bundles of greenbacks carelessly upon the table near him. "Slipped them out of the middle of a bundle of big notes and substituted small bills from my cash drawer. Two or three days ago."

Sam's eyes nearly popped out of his head at the size of the bundles and denomination of the bills, and he grinned like a pleased schoolboy. But seeing his expression, Denneth's jaw set itself firmly, and he said quickly:

"I didn't do it for the old reason, Sam," trying but not knowing how to explain the situation to his friend.

"Things are going bad with me and the 'missus,' and she——"

Then he stopped again. It was hard to speak of the thing nearest his heart, even to the man who he knew was devoted to him. Yet he must do so in order to complete his plans.

"She—we are to—" Then he broke off. He *could* not tell that! Hurrying on, he said more thickly: "I can't tell you the story now, Sam. You'll have to trust me. I've never lied to you yet and I never will. It's sufficient to say that she needs this money. Well, I'm lighting out to-night. It seems to be about the only thing I can do. I want you to handle this money for me, Sam. See that she gets a certain amount every month. Here's a memorandum telling you exactly how to manage it—the amount, and so forth. And don't let her know where it comes from. Don't let her ever see you or know that you ever knew me. She—she—I've just arranged for her to go to this address in New York." Handing Sam another slip of paper. "After that she will go *there*," handing him still another slip on which there was written another address. "Understand? The money will simply reach her once a month. That's all she need know, and that's all you'd better know. I hate to bother you, old man, but you are the only friend I've got. But there's one thing sure and certain, Sam, and that is that you'll have to keep straight to do this job! I don't believe anybody would ever suspect you if you do. Watch Mrs. Richardson. Keep track of her," he went on. "If she should move, you move too, or get her address, so the money won't miscarry. It will be her livelihood, remember that, old man! And in payment for this trouble *you* must take one-third of what's there," pointing to the bundles upon the table.

Sam flushed. "Do you think I'd let you pay me

fer doin' a job fer you?" he broke in with scorn. "You just Guzzle that—pipe it—cut that idee out of your cranium!"

"But, Sam, one has to have money to keep straight, you know—"

"Well, it don't have to be none of *your* money," Sam broke in again. "I ain't no sheep in rabbit's clothing—no Tommy in the preserve closet—no rubber of widows and orphans, even if I am a gink—a fluke—a bum, in plain American," he said resolutely. "I got chink put in the bank fer the kids when they get all the learnin' their nuts will hold in that cold-storage place where they is highbrowing it now. I don't need nothin' for myself!" and he looked with determination into Denneth's eyes, though his own eyes were rather dim with feeling.

"Then give me back one of those bundles," Denneth said firmly; and taking from Sam the smaller of the two, he slipped it into his own pocket. "I've got the address of those kiddies; I know your bank and the name of the town it is in, and the name in which that deposit for your children is made," he said. "I'll see that this money is deposited there to-morrow. Will you shake on it, partner?"

"Well, now that's another eye in the peacock's tail," Sam said, beaming. "Another chicken in the pie—a horse of another color, in plain American. Pal, you're white!"

"Then I had better go," Denneth said, catching the other's hand and shaking it warmly. "And leave this letter at the door of my apartment—but not before to-morrow night. I'll be out of reach by then. Understand? And don't let any one see you do it. Watch the papers. I don't believe, though, that they can find me—that is, not where *I* am going! Good-by, old man, and—God bless you!"

And before Sam Simmons could answer, Denneth Richardson had disappeared into the night.

* * * * *

No word from Denneth had reached Marjory during the following day; but happy in the renewed plans for buying all sorts of fluffy things for her self-adornment with the bills that Denneth had given her just before his departure, she felt no anxiety, but sang about her little household tasks. Late that afternoon her doorbell rang and Mary Anna, the colored maid, summoned her, saying that two officers of the law demanded to see Denneth Richardson.

With great hauteur, and in exact imitation of her mother, the little fair thing condescended to see them at the front door, and explained shortly that her husband had gone off on a business trip to New York.

At this innocent statement, made in all good faith, she was surprised and annoyed to see the two men exchange keen looks. Then one of them blocked the door open with the toe of his heavy boot. The expression of their faces alarmed her, and quickly calling out for reinforcement from the maid, who was, of course, hovering between the crack and keyhole of the kitchen door, Marjory demanded icily that the officers tell her why they were so ungentlemanly as to intrude upon her thus, and if they could not explain their conduct to kindly leave her presence at once!

"I'm sorry, ma'am," one of them said, bowing in awkward politeness as Mary Anna joined her mistress, "but we will have to ask you to give us Mr. Richardson's address in New York."

Marjory's indignation flared at such a question; and she waved grandly outward, while saying with a frightened, childish break in her voice: "Leave here immediately, sirs!"

The men continued to stand stolidly just outside the door, in spite of her pointing finger, and flushing with anger she said: "The question of my husband's whereabouts concerns only his wife." Then addressing the maid, she said haughtily: "Mary Anna, show the gentlemen the elevator"; and, turning on her heel, she marched into the sitting-room and flung herself upon the couch.

The two officers stood meekly shuffling their feet in silent embarrassment. At this Mary Anna became very much excited, and imitating her young mistress's every look and gesture she demanded: "*Gentlemens*, we both of us command that you git out of these house-premises double quick and most immediately! Do you hear? Git!" and she stepped forward threateningly.

Thereupon one of the men opened his coat and showed his badge, saying in a voice loud enough to reach Marjory, "I'm sorry, as I said, but duty is duty and the National Bank's expert accountant has just discovered there's several thousand dollars missing, and the evidence points to the receiving teller——"

But he got no further, for Mary Anna Victoria Roberta, large and black, her arms akimbo, her Virginia blood up, broke in:

"Holy Lamb o' Gawd! You great big ruffians, you! Git outer here and leave my little Miss alone. She don't know where he is!" and banging the door in the men's faces she screamed through it: "Oh, you jes' wait until I gits the vote!" And, her flat feet flapping upon the rugs, she made her way in loyal indignation to her mistress's side.

A few moments later a small package mysteriously appeared at the back door of the little flat. Marjory took it from Mary Anna's faithful hands and, breaking the seal, found a note inside:

"Little Anemone, flower I love," it ran, "it is best that I leave you. Follow exactly the directions here given and you will be safe. Take back your maiden name. Leave Hampton immediately. I have made all arrangements for your future as far as money is concerned. When you are well enough to leave the hospital, wire Mrs. Mary Morse, R. F. D. No. 31, Rosewood, New York, and she will meet you. There is a little home awaiting you and the child. She is keeping it for you. I want him to grow up among the woods and flowers. I have written her all; but she will guard and take care of you both. She befriended me once——"

Here the cleanness of the paper upon which the note was written was marred by words which had evidently been erased. Then in a few terse phrases Marjory was told the detailed plans which he had laid for her comfort throughout the ensuing weeks. A telegram stating the number of her hospital room, a ticket to New York, and a roll of crisp new bills were enclosed. His name was signed, and then beneath it, in a trembling chirography, the words appeared: "Try to forgive me, and never let *him* know the truth about his father."

Marjory lifted startled eyes. Then it *was* all true—the things those men had said! Oh, what would people say!!

Had Marjory been less thoughtlessly selfish, she would have been touched by the evident pains which Denneth had taken in her behalf, even though he had done this thing which would disgrace her for life. Instead of any such feeling, however, a furious anger against him blazed in her heart, choking out all else. His eyes as they had looked when he said good-by the morning before came to her in pleading; but she

forced them away as a thing of horror. She hated their growing vagueness—and had for a long time. To be so nearsighted as she had seen Denneth grow made any one look so silly! The way he had clung to her in that last embrace now seemed only a mockery in the light of this cruel thing which he had done to her. Clinching her small fists, she buried her head in the pillows upon the couch and burst into hysterical weeping. He had disgraced her forever! What would people say!

Her mother's criticism of Denneth came uppermost in her mind, and, with an intensity of hatred against him, she said over and over to herself that her mother was right—had always been right. She was a fool to have ever married him. She lay for several minutes in this condition, repeating to herself the words: "Married to a criminal! A *criminal!*" She imagined she saw the world's finger of scorn pointed at her. She was the wife of a thief! She was branded by Society forever!

Not once did she consider Denneth's possible innocence or suffering, nor did she try to make excuses for him. Instead she blamed upon him everything which had happened since she knew him that could, by any possibility, be construed against him. Brought up without sense of loyalty toward any one save her own little wilful self, she did not see at all how utterly selfish and despicable her attitude was. She felt herself to be entirely and unalterably the injured one, and took pleasure in ascribing to Denneth every form of wickedness she could conceive.

Finally the words of his note came back to her through the jumble of her distressed mind and, drying her eyes, she looked about her at the cozy green and brown room in which she lay, with its vases full of flowers and window boxes green with ferns. The

little desk set of birch bark, made by his own hands, the pictures of woody scenes upon the softly painted walls, everything spoke to her of him. The furnishing of the tiny place, in spite of its lack of roominess, gave a sense of the freedom of all out-of-doors. There was a restfulness about it that none save those familiar with the depths of the woods could fully appreciate. Yet, looking at it now, Marjory hated it all. It stifled her—gave her a sense of oppression. She felt unless she escaped from it soon she could not control herself at all!

Again she read his note. Yes, she must leave Hampton at once. She would catch the evening train. Sobbing violently, she called Mary Anna, and explaining as best she could, commanded her to help in their preparation for departure.

As she packed up all the dainty laces, the flimsy frivolities and foolish vanities which Denneth in his generosity had bestowed upon her, dabbing her eyes and swallowing the lump that would come uppermost in her throat, she ground her small teeth together and hoped she would never see him again. He had spoiled her life!

* * * * *

They found him in the strip of woodland where the river took a companionable sweep inward toward a flower-turfed mound, a pistol-hole through his left breast. He had thought it better so, but—his hand had fumbled!

He was taken back to Hampton and in due time sentence was pronounced. It proved to be a double one; for attempted suicide is punishable by law as attempted manslaughter. For that act he received a life sentence. For his theft, ten years more—in true keeping with the exquisitely unconscious irony of the law!

Under his real name of Richard Dennison, told during a burst of defiance and a bitter tirade against life, the woods were locked away from him forever. His honest attempt at honesty, his physical clean living, his love for Marjory, his hopes and ambitions, his entire better self, in fact, seemed to him almost as if they had never been. In the stench and filth of an underground cell his sight began to fail him rapidly; broken in spirit, body and soul, he was once more a man without a country, and though living he was dead. For his offense against property rights the Majesty of the Law had set its machinery in motion, ingeniously contrived—for what purpose? To exact recompense for the injury done? That would seem a logical end to achieve. No; rather to make its victim feel the full weight of its vengeance, and forever crush his manhood—a crime which in the sight of God must far outweigh any committed by the culprit.

Yet what stand does Society take with respect to offenses against those rights which are higher than those of property? Back in Dunham the weak-mouthed fop still violated trysts unchecked. Wild oats were sown, and Society reaped a blind, imbecile and blood-polluted menace with no real attempt to stop it. In warring countries spies and deserters are shot, while monsters who drag down into the mire God's most sacred law of nature escape unscathed.

The eyes of justice are bound! In crass egotism we count the present more important than the future. We do not even try to look further than "the little mist-bound span of life that the eyes of man have been allowed to see." Thus it takes civilization a thousand years to learn what it might learn in a day.

CHAPTER XIII

MARJORY dressed in hat and coat sat in her immaculate room at the Cosmopolitan Hospital, her baby held awkwardly upon her trembling knees. The slow tears filled her eyes, dimmed with suffering, while in her heart a frozen sort of pain grew to alarming sharpness. Yet almost without looking her hands went on robing the little fellow in cape and hood. Unclasping the locket of queer design from about her own neck, she clasped it about his. Then she wrote upon a scrap of paper the words. "His name is Stanley," and opening the locket's lid slipped the paper inside. Finally she stood up.

With a quick, frightened gesture the baby's little pink fingers reached out and twined themselves about one of her slender white ones as though he was fearful lest she let him fall. With the grip of a drowning man he clung to it, and made queer gurgling noises while trying at the same moment to ram his other fist into the limited facial opening which nature had provided him for this purpose.

A dry sob broke from Marjory's lips, and, raising her little son to her breast, she buried her face in his lacy softness, holding him convulsively closer until she felt his moist mouth kiss her burning cheek. With a feeling of marvel that such could have been the case, she recalled the days before his birth when she had thought that she did not want him! Perhaps her present distress and that which she was deliberately planning for herself for *his* sake was sent her in punishment for that aversion! Not want him? She involuntarily clasped him closer, and at the unwonted tenseness of her soft arms the little fellow cried out! Some-

how the whole of the mother-hour of agony that had given him birth seemed to sweep over Marjory at his cry; then came the precious memory of the first warm touch of him against her breast, the touch which had changed her whole point of view. Could she find the strength of will to carry out her present plan after all? Could she give him up? And yet she firmly believed that in fairness to him she must!

A knock sounded at the door. In answer to Marjory's summons a sweet-faced nurse appeared. "All right, Mrs. Matthews," she said. "The cab is waiting. Here, let me take the boy. Bless him! There!" as she cuddled him up to her and saw that Marjory had her small traveling bag. "You're sure you don't want any of us to go with you? Miss Comfort's off duty, you know, and can put you on the train just as well as not."

Marjory shook her head and was about to speak when the nurse continued: "Oh, by the way, that queer man has been around here again to-day. It's the funniest thing, but he insists that he *does* know you, and that he must see you! Said again that your husband sent him. And he gave me this note," looking anxiously at Marjory's flushed face; "but I wouldn't read it if it upsets you!"

"He's crazy!" Marjory exclaimed angrily. But, taking the proffered note, she opened and read it.

"Missus," it ran, "you must see me. I'm Sam Simmons. He said not but I gotter disobey this onct. Theys piped him. Things looks bad. Me and you is all he's got——"

But Marjory read no further. "I don't know what the idiot means!" she flared angrily. "I never heard of this man!" and tearing the letter to bits she threw

it from her. Then walking ahead of the nurse she passed down the hospital corridors and out the front door to a cab waiting in the dusk.

"To the Grand Central Station," she said, and taking her child from the nurse's arms Marjory settled herself back and the cab started. So engaged was she in letting bitter thoughts of her husband hold her mind in sway that she did not notice a dark figure as it slouched from the shadows of the hospital entrance and, entering another cab, followed them.

The very idea of Denneth trying to communicate with her, and so disgrace her and her precious boy! For, of course, that was what Sam Simmons's note had meant. So ran her indignant thoughts. Recalling Denneth's written words to her on that dreadful day in Hampton just before she had fled to New York, her face sneered with the hatred and loathing in which she now held her husband. Of course, he was sending Sam Simmons—*whoever Sam Simmons was!*—to try and get her to help him, now that he was in trouble! Well, she would not do it! Why, even now was she not about to make the greatest sacrifice a mother *can* make to save the good name of her boy? He should never know who his father was. Again all the hatred of which her nature was capable blazed in Marjory, and as the cab drew up in front of the station it gave her new impetus and strength to do that thing which she had so carefully planned for the sake of the baby in her arms.

Quickly she alighted, though not too quickly for Sam Simmons's keen eyes. Clasping the baby tightly in her arms, she hurried through the crowded station, stopping only long enough to check her suitcase. Many idly curious eyes followed for a moment her flushed face, caught by its appealing beauty, but that was all; and so as she passed through the exit of the

station and found herself upon a quiet side street she felt sure that she was safe from observation.

Looking neither to the right nor to the left she went rapidly forward, then turning up traversed one of the older residential avenues of the city until well up into the more fashionable neighborhood of side streets on the upper East Side. Here she continued toward the east. Shabby residences began to replace gloomily impressive ones. The exclusiveness of drawn curtains was succeeded by democratic and unshaded windows, where the light from inside shone out to cheer the passer-by. The fresh dampness of wind blowing across water smote her face. Weather-stained houses huddled together in a seeming effort to keep warm.

Down upon the river's edge a long building came into view. Seeing its one twinkling light, a star in an alcove in the side wall just where the grated fence which surrounded the big barren yard commenced, Marjory hurried toward it. The street was entirely deserted, and though she many times looked apprehensively about her she did not once see the slouching figure of Sam Simmons as it slid along from one shadow to another, never losing sight of her, yet never for an instant allowing his anxiety to get the better of his early professional training. He had promised his "pal" that he would keep track of Marjory. Denneth had given him the same address which he had given Marjory—that of a New England woman who had once befriended them both. Sam had supposed that Marjory would, of course, go there, as she had been told. It was to that address he was to send Denneth's money every month; yet here she was walking rapidly toward the river, instead of taking the train to the indicated station! His heart misgave him! He quickened his pursuit. Not only would he

protect her and her child from herself—if what he dimly suspected were to prove true—but he was also determined to see and talk to Marjory about her husband. Surely she could not know of Denneth's present predicament! The verdict that the court had passed in his case must be unsuspected by her, else she would certainly try to go to him and comfort him a little—

Marjory hurried on. During her school days in a fashionable convent in New York she had several times been shown the Home of His Lost Sheep, and so a few weeks before, while she lay in the hospital, the new and hitherto unsuspected love for her son having awokened in her breast, she had recalled the story of the place in connection with Denneth's words "never let him know who his father was!", and a plan, full fledged, had entered her mind. From then until now she had known no peace, for though what she was about to do would cause her untold suffering, she felt absolutely sure it was the best thing for the boy.

Marjory had lived for three years with the beautiful Sisters in the Holy Mother Convent. They were saints, every one of them! Life there had been a series of prayers, some study, and sweet girl friendships. But of life she had learned practically nothing. Even during vacations spent with her mother that lady was careful to guard her "innocent" thoughts, teaching her, instead of life's truths, the standards of a life of luxury and the false ideals of *clothes*. At the convent Marjory had heard with a feeling of awe the story of the Home of His Lost Sheep, and how, if instead of alms, a *baby* was put into the conveniently large alms-basket where the starlight always twinkled, a bell would ring inside the Home's gray walls. On that signal the basket would revolve, and the baby would be taken out and into the Home through a secret

door, and no questions asked. The true significance of this was, of course, lost upon her, then and even now. She knew little of life.

With the dear Sisters Marjory had once visited an orphanage very like the Home of His Lost Sheep. To her youthful eyes the inmates had seemed clean and happy little beings who were bound to grow up into good men and women under the guidance of the Sisters and the visiting Fathers. She had heard it said that few of these children ever knew who their fathers were. Somewhere she had read the phrase that "the sons of convicts nearly always turn out to be convicts themselves," and her mind quickly coupling the two things together, she had accepted the plan it suggested as heaven-sent. Little Stanley should not grow up under the shadow of his father's crimes! Little Stanley should have a fair chance! He should live with and grow up with women almost as good, no doubt, as the Sisters of the convent. Of little Stanley's whereabouts she would never tell her own mother. She had thought out even that detail. She would tell her mother that the little baby had died at birth. Yes, her son should have his fair chance in the world. She had pinned a note to his dress asking that he be allowed always to wear the locket of queer design about his neck. She could go to see him occasionally—she clasped him convulsively closer to her at this thought. Perhaps when he had grown up into a good and holy man she could tell him who she was; but now— Choking back a sob, she hurried across the street.

With arms outstretched she reached the alcove in which was the basket. She knelt down. The bell rang! That moment stayed with her all the rest of her life. Awake or asleep, it would often envelop her like a poisonous vapor. She could not reason the thing out to its ultimate conclusion. She did not know *how*

to reason, she was so appallingly ignorant of actual conditions, and she honestly believed she was acting for the best.

Blinded by tears she arose to her feet and stumbled away. But Sam Simmons had seen and understood the emptiness of her arms. There were few dark secrets of the city that he did not know. The alms-basket's true and frequent use was not known to many, but Sam, rough fellow though he was, had once helped a strange woman who had had occasion to use it.

With a spring like a catapult he was dashing across the street! His pal's little son! She was disposing of it! He had not dreamed she would take this course. He had thought of the river, but—

He had promised Denny—

The driver of a motor truck, which came sharply around the corner, caught sight of his flying figure—too late. A crowd sprang up from nowhere.

With a shudder Marjory quickened her steps and turned her head away as she reached the spot where the group had congregated.

"The *lady!*!" Sam whispered. "For God's sake, quick!" in answer to a question from one of the crowd; and the questioner, seeing Marjory, stepped in front of her and said:

"It's you, Miss, he's after wantin'."

"Oh—h!" Marjory gasped, frightened at the man's address. Then recovering her voice, and her mind taking in the meaning of the man's words, she answered: "But I don't know him. He can't want *me*. I—couldn't possibly speak to him!" and, shuddering, she tried to hurry on.

"Mother of Mary! An' ye a woman, to refuse a dyin' man's request? Ye shan't!!" he exclaimed, and boldly putting his burly arm out in front of Marjory he stopped her.

"Come on!" Taking her by the arm, he forced her to step from the curb, and though she was now trembling in her fright he led her up to where Sam lay, a dark, horribly mutilated object whose eyes alone showed that he was still living.

"Here's the lady, old sport," Marjory's captor said, his rough manner becoming surprisingly gentle as he leaned over Sam. Then turning to Marjory he commanded in his former tone: "Kneel down there. He wants to spake with ye!"

Sick with the sight of Sam's wrecked body, and too frightened to resist, Marjory leaned over him and listened as he gasped between the convulsions of agony that racked him:

"I promised Denny—my pal—you—money—every month." The world spun round for Marjory, but the bullying brute who had forced her to this strange man's side was standing threateningly over her, and so she dared not faint, nor move away. Presently the spasm of acute pain passed from Sam's drawn face, and in a stronger voice he said:

"I've tried to help Denny. Tell—him so. Tell him—" Then his voice weakened again, and he said faintly: "I'm hittin' the trail—vamoosing—kickin' the—bucket—I reckon. You must go—he—you— Oh, tell him I didn't mean to fail!" he said in feverish excitement. "Tell him—" But, his mind clearing again, he said in a quick, low voice, in spite of his growing weakness: "Take the bundle from me left pocket."

The man who had stopped Marjory leaned over and, taking a bundle from Sam's pocket, silently handed it to her; and Sam went on:

"That's jes' part. The other—is— The other is—" But before he could finish his sentence his eyes had become cold and still.

A great commotion ensued. The ambulance came clangng up. White uniforms lifted the mangled body; and in the excitement of the moment Marjory slipped away unnoticed and gained the quiet and safety of the next street. Absent-mindedly she put into her pocket the packet which she had received from Sam, and hurried breathlessly on. She was too alarmed and distressed by the whole dreadful experience even to try to understand the hurt man's words. She felt no interest in the package he had given her. Her one thought was to get away, for she realized that he was in some way connected with her criminal husband. She must not be seen or questioned. Hers and her boy's whole future depended upon not becoming identified in any way with the man who had wrecked her life!

Going back to the station, she recovered the suitcase which she had checked there only a short hour before—an hour so full of tragedy that it seemed it must be days—and then engaged a room at a nearby hotel. To relieve an overpowering sense of loneliness she sent off a non-committal telegram to her mother, merely giving her her address.

When, some days later, she remembered the package still reposing in her coat pocket, it was with no feeling of gratitude toward Denneth, or toward the dishonest man who had given his life in an honest endeavor to help a fellow-unfortunate, that she discovered it was a roll of bills; but rather did it serve to increase her anger against them both. The money in her possession was a constant source of anxiety and worry to her. She dared not spend it. She dared not return it to the bank from which she knew Denneth had taken it. Her whole mind and heart was set upon the one idea that she had a *right* not to have to share Denneth's blame; and never once did the

thought that Denneth had stolen for *her* enter her mind. With her ever-growing sense of self-preservation, there grew also the notion that she had a right to happiness. Lacking that, she saw herself a shining martyr in the light of her great self-pity, and so it was not long before she answered her mother's anxious letters from Virginia by returning to that lady, now basking in the affluence which the valuable billy-goat mining fields had brought, and once more took up the easy, idle life of her early girlhood. Once and once only did Marjory visit the Home of His Lost Sheep. During that visit, made soon after the terrible night of her sacrifice, she became so unstrung at the sight of the little pink and white bundle, with only its locket of queer design about its neck to in any way separate it from all the other pink and white bundles, that she felt it would not be safe for her to see little Stanley again. So great, so almost unbearable, was her physical longing to hold the warm little body of her body against her heart that she felt that her "mother-love," so called, could not stand the strain! She even prided herself secretly upon this fact, and thus fanned the flame of self-pity that was fast attaining the white heat of utter selfishness. There is nothing more sacred in the world than mother-love, but only when it is permeated and directed by spiritual and altruistic ideals is it in any way differentiated from the physical emotion and impulses which obtain even among the brutes. That the mother of a soul-endowed child is under compelling obligation to that child for the sake of its future, to direct her love by such ideals is self-evident. Yet many mothers, rather than suffer emotional discomfort in supplying the spiritual demands of that child, will take refuge in the indulgence of their purely physical affection for it. It is true that Marjory's sense of justice to her

boy's future was sufficiently strong to enable her to resist this impulse, yet she failed utterly to realize the duty she owed him to exercise a mother's influence toward his higher development during the formative period of his life. And so it was that she decided it would be easier and safer for them both to leave little Stanley entirely to the care of this institution!

* * * * *

Years passed, and the little pink and white bundle, "Number 99," grew into lonely boyhood, unloved, and known to most of the inmates of the Home of His Lost Sheep only by his number. The locket which still hung about his neck was the only link that bound him to a life begun outside those gray walls. During the golden age when most boys and girls live the happiest hours of their whole existence, when like a flower their babyhood is blossoming into childhood in the warmth and light of a mother's love, little Stanley Richardson's body was not allowed to starve—Church and State saw to that—but his soul, unnourished, did starve, and because of the lack of loving understanding was dwarfed and asleep within him.

Out in the world beyond the walls of the loveless barracks which was the only home he knew, other pink and white bundles, becoming sturdy little boys, held whole households in subjection. When they looked up their eyes would encounter other eyes gazing worshipfully down upon them with adoring faces, which, like the sun, seemed made to smile for them alone. They splashed in scented water in big white tubs. Nice, woolly things encased their drowsy bodies. Then later, when they had grown older and their eyes had become accustomed to the nearness and dearness of the world-of-things, gay toys surrounded them.

*"Childhood's bright days, kind words, sweet thoughts and mother-loving hours,
The happy birds, all out-door folks, and heaven-kissed fragrant flowers,
The brooks, the woods so deep and cool, the fields, the sky so blue—"*

were theirs. But not for Marjory's little son. Awakened by a bell, he dressed by a bell, was called to prayers by a bell. By the summons of a bell he knew he was to be taken out, one of a long, drab line, to Central Park, there to walk in, but not to *play* in, a green world that was made by nature for a children's paradise.

For him the twilight hour was marked by prayers again, but at no loving knee; instead, in the coldness of a barren hall in which he had just had supper as dreary and tasteless as was life itself. The Sandman came around; but there was no soft bosom to nod against. Of course he did not miss these joys, for he had never known them. Without tucking in he went to bed at the sound of the bell. Without "bon voyage" he sailed away to the Isle of Dreams. There, in lieu of fairy flowers and laughter, he met great, gaunt, hungry-eyed monsters who beat him as he was beaten in reality did he dare to complain or hint at the fact that life was very hard in the Home of His Lost Sheep.

Rules were strict and food scarce. A housekeeper who kept the bills down was considered an example of righteous perfection. She had honors heaped upon her humble head. To send a young offender to bed without his always-meager supper accomplished two things, and was indulged in freely. Laundry was an expensive luxury, and dark-brown homespun showed little dirt, while beneath the homespun nothing showed! The occupancy of beds by other creatures besides the

children was a matter of no moment—for vermin, along with flies in food, was a natural and harmless accident in the daily routine of the Home of His Lost Sheep. The nurses could not be expected to notice such things. Hired by the Church and partly by the State, they were too busy both religiously and politically. The officers could not see to it that the children were taught anything beyond the recognized elements of education. Their time was too taken up with politics pertaining to those who had already learned to sin to waste it in trying to keep these little homeless beggars from learning how to sin!

The church-goers who supported this Home? Why, embroidered altar cloths, cathedral spires and deep-toned organs were needed too much to throw away money on orphans and foundlings! And the City—the State—the Government? There were too many ward-heelers and the like to be supported—too many votes to buy. Each ash-cart had to have two big strong men to lift the heavy ash-cans that one slim woman, perchance, had put out; and if one of the giants did the lifting, the other must needs sit on the cart seat and hold the fiery steed, which would not have moved had he had the proverbial firecracker tied to his tail! There were too many City Departments with their hordes of open-palmed inspectors; too many superfluous municipal projects with their extravagant demands upon the treasury; too many governmental-salaried officials with too little to do to spend money in bringing up mere future citizens. Besides which there were plenty of perfectly good penitentiaries erected with taxpayers' money ready and waiting to receive these children when they entered the world from out the righteous confines of the Home of His Lost Sheep! Not that this Home stood out as worse than all the rest, for it was no worse. A little more religious,

perhaps, because of its connection with the Church, but differing scarcely at all from the rest.

Twelve years had rolled over Marjory's boy. Undersized, frail, timid, with smileless face in which two big, somber eyes burned, the little fellow had existed only to wonder vaguely about the world outside the gray walls that served to bar him from his rights as a little child. By nature sensitive and shrinking, he seemed totally unable to play as many of the other children played, in spite of their miserable surroundings. He was not many years old, therefore, before the Home's various attendants began to rebuke his timid silence as pure sullenness, and his sensitiveness as stubbornness!

So plastic is the growing mind of a child, so open to thought influence, that very soon Stanley's silence really did begin to take on the tinge of sullenness; and his sensitive thoughts, thrown back upon themselves, became stubborn. Yearning for affection and encouragement, and receiving nothing but constant criticism and severe punishment for the slightest infraction of petty rules, his stubbornness rapidly developed into a grim enjoyment of giving trouble. Finding then that mischievousness, it mattered not how innocent, was always punished, he soon learned to lie and deceive or in any other manner protect himself, while his wilful nature steadily grew, making him more and more determined to have his way. He was not an attractive lad. Vaguely conscious of his inability to charm, at a very early age his natural reticence attained proportions seldom met with in children. All this was before he had reached the age when he reasoned about anything; and so, even though he had inherited his father's innate honesty and love of fair play, these traits were buried as his father's had become buried beneath the bad influence of a bad environment. Pos-

sessed with a sense of loyalty, he met with no one to call it forth. Full of his father's love of the great out-of-doors, he loathed and hated the prison walls of the Home of His Lost Sheep, without fully realizing why he did so. Full, also, of his defiance, yet inheriting a streak of moral cowardice from his mother, he became crafty, afraid of indulging openly in the independence of word and thought which had made life so hard for his father. Not one ray of sunshine had thus far come into the poor little fellow's life; but one day everything seemed entirely changed for him. A smaller boy in the Home, a partial cripple both in body and mind, openly cried when Stanley was beaten for a misdemeanor; and on Stanley's being sent to bed, supperless, crawled over to him after the lights were out. Putting his misshapen arms about Stanley, he whispered in a frightened voice: "Don't cry, Big Boy. *She* git licked, too, when *me* big boy. Don't cry! Me kill lions and chipmunks and kangaroos and spiders!"

He wound up every sentence with these words. They seemed a part of the little dwarfed creature himself, and were always followed by a blow from his small fist, which was, in turn, followed by a shrill, foolish laugh of delight, conveying the idea to his hearer that his poor brain was convinced that he *had* killed all four.

His act toward Stanley was a small thing. It meant little on the part of the defective child; but to Stanley, the emotion-starved lad, it meant the opening up of an entirely new world—a world in which love was the ruler, and he its willing subject.

From that day forth there was seldom a moment during his waking hours that Stanley did not champion the rights of the cuffed and despised, the scoffed-at and ill-treated little hunchback offspring of two alco-

holic degenerates. To him the loose-mouthed, vacant-eyed face of the crippled youngster was beautiful. From an inborn sense of loyalty, coupled with his mother's generally suppressed, but nevertheless real power of imagination, Stanley bestowed upon this queer little companion all the virtues of which he knew or could conceive. This devotion to the Home's jester on the part of the sullen, silent lad brought down upon his head many taunts from the other children and much undeserved punishment from the nurses. This fact in no way altered Stanley's attitude toward his irresponsible protégé; and it was because of this younger and weaker fellow-orphan that Stanley dreamed oftener than ever of the world outside the walls which held him prisoner. He longed to free the little fellow from the taunts and jibes which were his daily lot.

One day as he stood peering through the rails of the iron fence which enclosed the barren place dignified by the name of "the yard," a plan so entrancing in its possibilities that it fairly took his breath away popped into Stanley's head. Down, way down in the corner nearest the river he had noticed that one of the fence rails was rusty and that the solder holding it in place was quite loose. That night, after everything was still, he tried it. It was looser even than he had dared to hope. Thereafter every night a stealthy little figure might have been seen making its way to the rail and carefully shaking it at its bottom foundation. Soon Stanley's perseverance was rewarded by his ability to break the rail away from the solder that held it; and using his entire strength, he pushed it far to one side, even though the solder at the top held. Much to his delight he found the opening was large enough to squeeze his body through. He would escape! He would go out into that green

world of which he knew so little! Taking with him the poor little hunchback that everyone treated so cruelly, they both would live the life of the other boys whom Stanley had seen on his walks through the park, boys who seemed so care-free and happy. He and the little "Lion," for the hunchback had been dubbed that by those who tormented him, would go and live in Central Park where everything was so beautiful and free. The troubled thought of how they would feed themselves had occasionally flitted through Stanley's mind, but only vaguely and for a very few moments at a time. He had always dismissed it as one that was of no consequence. The birds, the squirrels, all outdoor folk found ways and means of living, he argued—if his mild and occasional thoughts on the subject could be called arguing—so why should not he?

Flushed with triumph Stanley crept back to the dormitory where he and the Lion lived, and silently going to the latter's cot, picked up the little misshapen body. Again he gained the darkness of the yard without having been perceived.

At the far corner of the fence he put his little charge down and, waking him, for he had slept as a baby does, he endeavored to explain the plan for their escape.

"Say, kid," he said, "don't you want to get out of this place? I do. See, you can get right through that rail there. Try it," as the vacant face of the little half wit grinned up at him sleepily. "Try it," and Stanley lifted him up, putting one of the child's crooked legs through the opening made by the misplaced rail. "See, see, you can do it! Try!" But the Lion was obdurate and astride the coping that held the rails continued to grin foolishly up at Stanley.

"There's lions and chipmunks and kangaroos out there," the latter whispered in encouragement, a pang

of fear filling him lest their two figures be seen or heard and his plans spoiled forever. "There's spiders too, heaps of spiders!"

The words worked like magic. "Me kill lions and chipmunks and kangaroos and spiders!" the child cried, and wriggling his deformed body through the opening, he turned and whacked his fist down on Stanley's head, laughing shrilly. "Me kill lions and spiders!" "Whack!"

"Of course you can," Stanley agreed, himself wriggling through, though with more difficulty. "Lion's a fine boy—but come on, let's beat it!" as he gained the street outside. Taking hold of the other boy's hand he started running up the side street past the alcove with its twinkling star.

Free! He was free! Free from the stench of the damp dormitories, and the foul food. Free from the frowning gray walls, and the taunts and sneers of the other children. As for his little companion, Stanley thought, no one should ever poke fun at his deformities again! The lad's whole better nature flared with angry loyalty as, running forward, he recalled the suffering of the little idiot by his side. Out in this world of freedom they were both fast gaining he would make the little hunchback happy. He felt absolutely sure of that. Together they would whoop and run just like other boys. Soon they would have roller skates and nice clothes and good things to eat. He had once asked one of the nurses in the Home of His Lost Sheep why there was a difference? She had told him in no gentle language that bastards must be content with what they could get! He did not know in the least what the word she had used meant, but had argued in his own mind that such a title was given only to children who lived in Homes like the one in which he had been brought up. But now, now he and the

little hunchback were surely no longer bastards. They were free just like other boys, and at this conclusion Stanley felt for the first time in his life the exuberance of confident boyhood.

It was comparatively early in the evening, in spite of the fact that the night seemed ages old to the two little runaways, and as they neared Avenue A they came upon a belated fruit cart left outside a nearby saloon, in which the vendor was refreshing his thirsty soul.

The Lion spying the red apples, bright in the light cast by the street lamp, began to slobber and whine like a ravenous animal. It was part of his mental lack that the sight of food should always affect him so, and to Stanley's way of thinking, that was the only blot on an otherwise charming and lovable child.

"Apples, me wants them. Me wants!" the Lion said peremptorily.

"No, no," Stanley coaxed, nervous because of their nearness to the Home of His Lost Sheep, and intuitively realizing it would be the greater part of prudence to quit its neighborhood as quickly as possible. "You can have some apples when we get to the Park."

But the little Lion, refusing to follow, dragged upon Stanley's hand, his big eyes rolling, his tongue lolling out, while he repeated defiantly and with unalterable stubbornness, "Apples. Me wants, me wants!"

"But kid, I'll get you some later. Come on!" and he yanked the smaller boy forward, not unroughly. "Quit your fooling and come *on!*"

"Apples, me wants, me wants, me wants!" the half wit cried, beginning to kick and struggle, making horrible noises with his lolling tongue.

"Gee," Stanley said, his anger beginning to rise, "if you act like this I'll cuff you!" and his hand raised itself above the other's malformed head. But look-

ing down into the idiotic convulsed face his heart misgave him, and all the tenderness he had ever felt for the queer little fellow who was his only friend on earth came uppermost.

"Here, kid," he said, "look! I'll lend you my locket. See what a pretty locket it is!" taking off the locket of queer design and putting it about the other's neck. "See how shiny and pretty it is!"

The Lion, handling it, gazed at it for a moment and, ceasing to whine, started forward with Stanley. Then espying the fruit again he began to fairly howl.

"Oh, gee, don't cry, kid," Stanley begged, "I'll give you one," and walking over to the pushcart he picked up a big red apple. "Here!"

Then seeing bananas too, he took one of those. The fruit looked luscious. Save for Christmas and occasional other days when important visitors of State or Church came to the Home of His Lost Sheep, Stanley had never known the joy of eating fruit; so that as his hand went out to pacify the child who was under his guidance and protection, his own appetite became suddenly whetted. Grabbing the apples and oranges that lay a tempting mass of bright color upon the cart, he stuffed his and the Lion's pockets full. In his mind there was no more thought of theft than if he had been plucking a flower from his mother's garden, had he been fortunate enough to know either; and so when the saloon door opposite swung open and a big burly Italian came reeling out, it was with no thought of danger that Stanley and the little hunchback slowly turned from the wagon and started on their way. To the alcohol-inflamed mind of the fruit vendor, however, their bulging pockets and full hands screamed aloud their guilt.

"Iddio! Diavolo!" the vendor thundered. Then rushing back into the saloon he announced excitedly

to those assembled about the bar, "Thieves! Bambini thieves! Come help-er me catch-er!"

Other inflamed minds caught the words, and Stanley and his companion were soon surrounded by a liquor-crazed, gesticulating crowd of brutes, who, though confused as to what the trouble was, vaguely realized there *was* trouble and knew there would be more!

Stubbornly standing his ground, little Stanley refused to answer their clamorous questions. He had seen many of the Home's employees in just such a hysterical state, as he thought, when anything occurred to upset them; and so now he was not the least alarmed by the brutal men, until a familiar face suddenly showed through an opening in the crowd, and he felt a rough hand upon his shoulder.

"So it's you, is it, that's after gitting thru dat broke rail?" the watchman of the Home of His Lost Sheep said. "Hold still there, you—— son of a ——," foul words pouring unchecked from the obscene mouth, "I heard the row, and run out to see what was happening jest after you sneaked. Hell!" and he gave Stanley a crack over the head with his stick. "And I'll be blowed if it ain't the nutty one, too!" and he caught the whimpering Lion by the nape of the neck. Then to the liquor-crazed mob he said: "Git outer my way. It's after passing I am!" and half dragging, half kicking the boys through the crowd, he muttered to himself: "Hell of a mess I'd been in if these two had got away," and dribbling an exgurgitating black and noisome verbal abuse of the boys, this past master of blasphemy, seemingly anxious to display his erudition in loathsome corruption, dragged his two captives back past the basket, where the bell had just rung and a woman's figure might be seen scurrying away. Driving them through the iron

gates he gave them into the custody of the matron who awaited them.

To run away from that Home—God forgive the cruel irony of the name!—was a serious offense. To influence the going of another, a still more serious offense; but thieving in the open where a reporter from some newspaper might discover it, and thus give a black eye to the excellent morals taught in the Home—well that was adequately punished only by use of an underground cell, the secret place wherein one piece of bread and one-half gill of water a day, if remembered, with beatings thrown in, were the victim's portion. So Stanley was forthwith, night though it was, consigned to the cell, and chained there to an iron cross symbolical of Him who loved little children, this being one of the mild forms of the Home's punishment régime.

It was here, with the tortured half-witted cries of the one person who had touched his finer nature ringing in his ears, that Stanley made up his mind that the next time he escaped he would not do so carelessly. An older boy he had known had been sent from the Home to a place called a Reform School. Stanley did not know what a Reform School was, but now decided that anything would be better than the place in which he was kept. He would follow the example of the older boy. In hatred and burning anger against his tormentors, he determined that he would do any and everything in his power to inflict trouble upon the matron, the nurses and the officials of the Home, just as this older boy had done. Defiance once having awakened in him, he lost his former timidity, forgot his craftiness and fear of being caught, and with his mind and heart reeking with vengeance and revolt, planned the course of misconduct destined to free him from the Home.

Smashing a chapel window, he stole in and set fire

to the place. Then copying as nearly as possible the vile language of the watchman, he screamed and swore and managed to work himself into a hysteria in which his natural reticence had no part.

Very soon this blasphemous conduct had its desired effect. He was pronounced an incorrigible and "with a character," that is, written word from the matron stating that he was a liar, a thief, and everything derogatory that could possibly be said about a boy of his age, and accompanied by the information that he needed the closest watching and confinement, Stanley was sentenced by the court to the State Reform School, the ovule which, developed by Society, produces in its inmates the spirit of vengeance rather than the purpose of right living, the place which is the progenitor of those more talked-of, but no more prolific, schools of crime, the Reformatory, the Penitentiary, and State's Prison.

Thus the future citizens of the United States of America are educated, equipped, and graduated into a class which is popularly recognized to be a menace to Society, in addition to which gratuitous teachings these citizens are deprived of all liberty and, in our professedly free country, early become the most helpless of slaves, of whom time, strength, and manhood itself is demanded without hope of remuneration or reward. In the name of reforming we go on accomplishing just the opposite thing, because the spirit of punishment and revenge and not of helpfulness toward malefactors, is rife among us. We are descendants of Caliban, and while claiming to have developed ethically, are continually dragging down and retarding the evolution of the physical minded into the spiritual minded man by using cruelty and brute force instead of the force of reason and sympathy, which latter alone can make of us a better race, wherein the criminal, so called, will have no place.

CHAPTER XIV

THE late afternoon was one in early spring, and as Stanley, in the custody of the officer who was conducting him to his new abode, passed out of the boundaries of the noise-infested city, and the open country was revealed on all sides, it seemed a fairyland indeed to the hitherto walled-in, orphanage-bred child, who, though not conscious of the fact, had inherited an unusual appreciation of the beauty of woods and fields. He longed for a life in which gray walls and prison-like rules played no part. Yet of such a life he knew naught, nor could his untaught imagination conceive its actual conditions. His lot had not fallen where the bud of childhood develops into the flower of maturity in the purity of God's sunlight and air, untainted by the sins of man.

A winding stream, with lily bells along its bank which bent down to gaze at their own reflection, wound serpent-like through the meadows gay with bloom. The sky blushed as the sun kissed her good-night behind the hills. Bird answering bird, they sang their evening songs, sweet but subdued, a harmony backed by roseate skies. Little children sensing in the air the renewed freedom of nature, to their elders exemplified by bursting bud, romped with hilarious excitement, none of them troubled by any thought of the future.

The train sped on. First its course led through thickly populated suburbs, then through more sparsely settled ones, until reaching the open country it seemed fairly singing its way toward a place of hope and happiness. Stanley, in spite of the presence of his law-garbed companion, felt his heart soaring with expectation. Surely if the Reform School to which he was being sent was over beyond the purple hills, it

was away from squalor and distress, and he had made no mistake in deliberately planning such misconduct as to result in his escape from the Home, even though that escape was accompanied with disgrace and dire threats of what the future held in store for him.

Looking from the window at the beautiful world about him, his mind could find no room for apprehension based on vague tales of trouble and pain awaiting him. The way to the Reform School lay through woods and meadows! His imagination pictured it in a more and more idealized light. In childish impatience he longed for the journey to end, so that he might find himself in the Castle of his Dreams.

This wish was hardly conceived before the train stopped. Guided from it by the silent officer, Stanley found before him a small village of cosy cottages looking home-like indeed in their setting of emerald hills. The now golden-pink stream which had followed the train's winding way from the city's outskirts took a sudden rocky turn, and dancing and sparkling, sent a dashing spray high beneath a rustic bridge.

"Ninety-nine, come with me," Stanley's companion said.

Obeying him the lad soon found himself inside a wagon built like a box, through the sides and top of which no light penetrated. The outdoors could be seen only through the grated end at which he had entered and which was now securely closed.

At the unexpected gloom of this queer vehicle and the officer's desertion of him, coupled with his instructions to its driver that "Ninety-nine was an incorrigible and must be closely watched," Stanley's heart misgave him. But having been used all his life to bodily restraint and abuse, and unused to courtesy or kindness, he was not affected as would have been a child who had been brought up in normal surroundings.

The driver silently regained his box and the wagon rattled away. Stanley forgot his momentary fear and, gazing through the wagon's barred end, eagerly watched the scenes which they passed. To the nature-starved boy the traversing of the road in its spring-time dress of dogwood trees with full-blown orchards on either side was the most wonderful adventure in his life. A longing to share it with the Lion caused a slow, strange lump to rise in his throat; and his aspiration to free the little hunchback from further pain made him redouble his determination to some day get the little boy out from the Home of His Lost Sheep. Reaching the Reform School, a beautiful place doubtless, where flowers bloomed, he would surely find someone to help him in this aim.

But at that moment Stanley's thoughts were cut short by the wagon's sudden stopping in front of a big, bare building. Its dingy, gaunt face stared out upon the world, while from it trees and flowers stood apart.

"Git out! We're here," the driver commanded Stanley. And jumping down from his box he unlocked the wagon's grated end. "No monkey business! The officer give you a character, so I know about *you*. Git!" And as a delicate attention to the newcomer, the driver yanked Stanley from the wagon and, cuffing him, set him down.

At the noise of their arrival another man, not unlike the driver, yet in aspect more brutal, appeared as if by magic at the door. He whispered a few moments with the driver, and then without the formality of a salutation; gave Stanley a push forward.

"Go inside, damn you! This ain't no Fifth Avenoo boardin' school. This here's a Reform School. No dilly-dallying allowed," he said. "Bill," jerking his finger over his shoulder toward the driver, "has given me *your* character, all right!" And shoving Stanley

over the doorsill he followed him into the dismal hall.

With a chilling of his heart so intense that it was numbing to his mentality, all of Stanley's preconceived ideas of the Reform School vanished. His newly kindled spark of life's greatest stimulant, hope, died, and in its place there was born in him a feeling of hatred and desperation very akin to the one which had filled him when, chained and unable to move, he had received his last beating in the Home. And he had deliberately planned his coming to this new place. In the superior wisdom of twelve years he had been fool enough to think that outside the walls of the orphanage there was some small degree of boyhood's rights awaiting him.

"Go in there," the repulsive-looking attendant commanded.

Stepping through a door which the man had indicated by a shove in its direction, Stanley was confronted by a third man. Here again a whispered conversation was held, and addressing him the uniformed official said :

"Young man, you've come to us with a character. Understand? You are not very big," looking Stanley up and down, "but you'll be smaller still if you don't follow our rules. Bread and water for the infractious, and mighty little of it—mighty little." Then turning to the guard who had brought Stanley before him :

"Take him to the dormitory. See that his clothes are locked up and that he gets in bed." Then again turning to Stanley he added : "You are to obey the guard absolutely. He reports to me every day; and if you are disobedient, I'll also attend to your punishment. Do you understand?"

At these words all of Stanley's sullenness came uppermost. He did not answer, and without more ado was led away to the dormitory where dozens of other

boys were undressing, and as they did so, handing their clothes to a guard, who in turn locked the garments in a closet for the night.

Of course this custom of treating all children as if they were dangerous degenerates or lunatics, and never for a single moment appealing to their honor, did not seem so unreasonable to Stanley as it would have done to a more normal boy. A Reform School, however, is supposed to be, not a place of punishment, but a place of constructive correction, where the child who has had no proper home training can be taught to be manly and self-reliant, where he is taught a trade, and finally develops through corrective discipline and good influence into a useful, law-abiding member of Society! These schools are often called Protectorates, thereby implying their protection over homeless and friendless children. Yet they employ the worst methods of penology. Is it likely that an inmate of such a school will become a useful member of Society if the system in vogue in prisons is applied to him? Yet that is what is being done in practically all of the so-called Reform Schools and Protectorates, to such an extent that the ones run along different and more sane lines stand out today as so radical that the papers devote many news columns to describing them. It is the unusual and not the usual, the abnormal and not the normal, which attracts the attention of the people and the press. In the vernacular of a big city daily: "If a dog bites a man the fact is of little interest, but if a man bites a dog, that makes a 'first liner' news item." And so it is with every phase of life. The things we are accustomed to do not impress us.

Having succeeded in undressing himself Stanley handed his clothes to the guard, first having maliciously fixed a pin in them in such a way as to prick the guard when he took hold of them. Stanley was

fast learning the lesson of cruelty which he saw all about him.

"Here you—little devil, what yer got around your neck?" this gentle teacher of future good citizens demanded, pointing to Stanley's locket of queer design. "Give it to me! No joolry allowed. Where'd you steal it, anyhow? Take it off!" and he reached out his brawny paw.

Stanley backed away. His hand convulsively hid the locket. The man made a lunge forward, while the other boys in the dormitory looked on with the interest of unsympathetic young males who greet anything novel with delight; and the guard shouted:

"You ———. You'll learn to mind me!" and he would have floored Stanley save for the boy's agility and nimble wit. Jumping aside as the man's brutal fist reached the spot where he had been standing, Stanley looked up at him, his somber eyes burning. Having once before, in the Home, tried the same lie on a like occasion he now said:

"This locket was blessed by the Mother Mary. It was tied about my neck by a Holy Father. A Sinless Sister told me I must always wear it, and that it would mean *one thousand years in purgatory to anyone who took it off.*"

The guard's hands fell to his side; then he crossed himself. "Git in bed!" he demanded harshly, not entirely believing the boy, but afraid not to pay heed to such warning.

Stanley crawled into the foul infested bunk which was assigned to him. The guard put the lights out; and stunned and heartsore the little newcomer proceeded to spend endless nightmare-ridden yet wakeful hours, too destructive in their influence to be entitled to any real place in the golden age of childhood. As he could sleep little, he spent his time in thinking up

ways and means of giving the guard trouble and physical pain. He would get even with him!

The sun was not up the next morning before Stanley was awakened by a bell. Jumping up, he washed by a bell. His clothes were given to him and he dressed by a bell, just as the other boys were doing. Filing into the mess hall at the signal of a bell and, following the Reform-bred rule of snatching whatever sour bread he could from a central dish, he was commanded to join in a muttered and sullen grace at the sound of a bell.

After washing down this horrid meal with the aid of a black liquid dignified by the name of coffee, at the signal of a bell he was sent into a long, low room, dimly lighted and poorly ventilated, there to study and recite his lessons for one hour. This hour furnished the education so much bragged about by the school officials and for which taxpayers were spending thousands of dollars annually. After that he sat long hours at a shoe-lasting bench, and later, after a week or so, he was taught to re-bottom chairs, which accomplishment was followed by instruction in half a dozen other low-pay jobs. Did he but show any particular aptitude for some form of labor higher up in the industrial scale, he was frowned upon as one who thought himself too good for the work the Lord had planned for such as he. This was the teaching of a *trade* which he got.

In this routine, bells and all, Stanley could see little difference from his life at the Home of His Lost Sheep; and yet in the menacing attitude of the guards standing about he realized that here he was watched far more closely and treated with even less personal consideration than had been the case in his former abode.

It was not many weeks before Stanley discovered

that in the estimation of the guards and ignorant teachers, at least, an "incorrigible," an inmate "with a character," had no human rights at all, but, like a convict, is a legalized slave. Soon he was made to understand that if he would gain any comforts or privileges while being reformed, he must be entirely unresisting in these men's hands. It is the policy of our country to hire low-priced masters for our child slaves. Though accounted rich among the nations of the earth, our country is too poor to provide well-paid monitors in the institutions for the making of men!

The dreary months dragged on, while Stanley in company with the other boys lived out a drab existence, made interesting to him only in so far as he could give pain to some guard or other. Some of the older boys of his acquaintance, recognizing his latent talent for craftiness, gave him lessons in "snitching," or the art of picking pockets, having been themselves, before their apprehension and committal, the clever tools of professional "Fagins," those men who engage in the profession of teaching boys how to become thieves. These pocket-picking lessons were indulged in among the boys as the most interesting of games, and so it was that Stanley early became proficient in this line. Yet the lad was often seen playing in local baseball matches, or whooping and running like the happy and innocent boys unfettered by the State. The fact was that the Reform School's baseball team was conducted for the benefit of any possible citizens who might perchance take the trouble to investigate the school's methods of recreation! It was the humane cloak that hid inhumanity. On the occasion of these joyous baseball games Stanley's animal spirits would involuntarily show themselves. It is hard even for restraint and cruelty to destroy entirely the natural energy of youth, and his nature as yet

had not become wholly perverted. On the bleachers the deacons of local churches, trusting souls who abhor investigations, watched Stanley and the other boys with benign and fatherly expressions. On these bleachers, too, sat local politicians, blindly virtuous, loudly talking of the comforts and advantages which the boys received at this school. They hinted at the fact that all these comforts and advantages had been brought about by *them*, thus shrewdly obtaining ballots for their next election. Voteless women, whose energies were expended upon sewing circles and oyster suppers for the benefit of the Hottentots, and who felt their place was in the home and not meddling in politics pertaining to motherless children, smiled and patted themselves upon the back, rejoicing in the perfection of this splendid educational institution. Had these same patronesses and trustees but taken the time and trouble to find out, they would have discovered that Stanley was more often doing duty on the "guard line" than playing ball, or whooping and running in the sunshine. He seldom had the time or the inclination to whoop and run, or in any other way display the natural exuberance of boyhood. The "guard line" is one of our refined twentieth century barbarities. It was invented for the purpose of "putting the fear of God in the boys' hearts," or, in truthfully expressed English, destroying absolutely any spirits or spontaneity which may happen to be left in a boy who has fallen beneath the chastising hand of the Law! After standing on a crack of the floor with hands tied behind one's back for at least six, or sometimes twelve hours, one's physical endurance is apt to break. If this happened, as it often did in Stanley's case, and the culprit fainted, a club or pistol butt administered on the head or on the face, or wherever else it happened to hit, was the reviv-

ing process used. If perchance while on such duty Stanley would fall asleep, a fond and loving guardian of his morals stuck a pin in him to wake him up! Or if, again, while so standing Stanley cried out or begged for mercy, he was promptly cast into the school dungeon, there to have the straight-jacket applied, that effective apparatus in vogue in prisons for the making of embittered criminals. This instrument of torture, invented since the days of the Inquisition, though it would have done credit to the minions of Charles V., is made of a very heavy piece of canvas cut to fit the human body, and with heavy cords running through brass eyelets down each side. He who is having his criminal character turned into that of a strong and upright one, is commanded to lie face down on the floor. While he is in this position the jacket is put on him. The guard then places his own foot in the middle of the culprit's back, and thus securing leverage, draws the rope taut. A man may be killed in this manner within a very few moments; but the guards in a Reform School or in the higher grades of Penal Institutions—ever careful not to go too far—seldom do more than bind their victim so tight that his hands and feet become numb. Stanley was many times left in this jacket for twenty-four hours at a time in the dark coldness of the dank dungeon. When the jacket was removed he lay writhing in agony upon the floor as circulation returned to his legs and arms. If this treatment was not applied, some other of like fiendishness was, or else he was simply left forgotten in his dungeon until his delirious “bug-house” screams threatened to be heard beyond the school's righteous walls.

After several years of this sort of life, in which his every vicious instinct grew into an alarming love of lying, cheating, fighting, and managing to do the

guards a dirty trick, often escaping detection but more often caught, the obscenely ugly guard one day demanded something of Stanley which would be inconceivable to the brutes. With the indignant horror born of a sexually clean mind which had stayed clean in spite of inflicted mental and physical suffering and moral somnolence, Stanley refused to obey, and was forthwith reported to the head of the institution as being disobedient, unruly, defiant and incorrigible to the last degree!

There was thereupon heaped upon him a series of such frightful, continuous, and spectacular punishments that even some of the other guards could not bear the sight. There were arguments among them—then the truth coming to the attention of some of the older boys, a formidable school riot ensued.

During the riot Stanley, with his now ever present craftiness, managed to plunge a knife into the guard who had so continually insulted and mistreated him. In spite of the confusion which prevailed he was detected and apprehended; and desperately confessing, was, after a short court trial, ordered transferred to the Reformatory, a higher grade of the Reform School, in which America's system of educating her criminal classes continues to be accomplished under the guise of reform.

* * * * *

More bitter and revengeful than ever, Stanley arrived within a few days at the Reformatory, or High School of the present day system of penology. This institution, larger and of stronger masonry perhaps, was nevertheless much like those others in which the lad had been brought up. Situated in the most barren and unattractive spot that could readily be found, it was just the next step in his progress of misery.

Wards of the State, or offenders against the State, or merely unfortunate folk convicted through circumstantial evidence, they are one and all so despised, considered so unfit for association with their fellow-men, that they must needs be cast as far as possible out of the path trod by Society. And so our public and penal institutions are located accordingly. In these institutions the morally sick among us are put huddled together, irrespective of physical or mental shortcomings; to the self-righteous, unprogressive, and non-constructive mind of the average citizen, they constitute the moral leper colonies of our civilization. Yet unpunished except by the laws of nature, which demand toll even unto the third and fourth generation, another class of lepers walks about among us, oftentimes unnoticed, rarely shunned, sowing wild oats for *others* to reap.

But Stanley had not been attaining all his life his State imposed knowledge of crime for nothing. And so on entering the Reformatory he decided to change his tactics. In his experience incorrigible boys did not receive punishment commensurate with their deserts. Those boys in fact who oftenest managed to escape punishment were generally the worst boys. They simply saw to it that their methods were such that they were not caught. This distorted lesson in the survival of the fittest, one which taught cunning, craftiness, and hypocrisy, he had begun to learn quite early in life. Yet because his better nature would involuntarily come uppermost, Stanley had not attained cleverness in its application. The only real cleverness he had thus far exhibited was that connected with his daily lessons in picking pockets. Henceforth, he decided, he would in no way try to help a fellow inmate, nor would he struggle against the brutal discipline of the guards. Questioning no rule of the Reformatory,

he would become, to all appearances, docile and subservient. He would acquiesce in any and every command. He realized that the less initiative a boy had, the more apt he was to gain marks for good behavior. If lacking enough in character, that is in the eyes of the officials, he would come to be looked upon almost as a pet; and if parole was subsequently requested, he was more apt to gain it quickly. Therefore Stanley determined, by stealth and hypocrisy, to gain his freedom. When once he had gained that freedom—well, that was another matter!

Soon after Stanley had reached this decision a religious fanatic, a white bearded old evangelist with a Biblical vocabulary of hell-and-damnation punctuating his fire-and-brimstone doctrines, became a visiting angel to the Reformatory. For many years, in fact ever since his own dear boy, "the bone of his bone, the flesh of his flesh," had heaped shame upon his head, this devout man, Deacon Dennison, giving his life to the redeeming of other men's sons, had been traveling around preaching the terrors of purgatory to young offenders.

Working upon his own emotions, and thus theirs, he made converts in job lots. These converts once having confessed their sins and joined the church, the Deacon's job was done; and in self-satisfied complacency he would move on to the next town, leaving his emotionally stirred converts the bewildered victims of a doctrine in which there was no more spirituality or practicality than that which had governed his own sanctimonious life.

Each year a group of inmates of the Reformatory became thus converted. Besides acting as a stimulating and alluring spot of excitement in their otherwise drab lives, it stood them in excellent stead in working for a parole. There was nothing that warmed the

cockles of the officials' or the trustees' hearts like a scene wherein these clever sheep separated themselves from the goats.

It did not take Stanley long to realize that a profession of Christianity would be the cleverest and quickest way to gain his freedom. Going to Deacon Dennison on the occasion of his next visit, together they wrestled with his unholy spirit until, with strenuous words of exhortation, it was subdued, and Stanley's conversion became a dramatic fact.

The walls of the Reformatory were soon left behind him. With fatherly advice from some and sneering prophecies from others of the guards, he found himself for the first time in his life out in a world where there were no walls to confine him. It mattered not that he had been given little training to meet the strange and untried conditions confronting him. He was only a foundling—a child of the people—a soul which had been brought into the world without volition on his part, and had ever since been a drain on the purse of the State. Yet he must "make good"!

In the Reformatory, that place where parents complacently shift personal responsibility for other people's children upon governmental shoulders without a thought for the homeless ones' future, though regarding their own children's future as all-important, Stanley had piled up, mountain high, marks of good behavior through deception. But he was a member of the church!

He was over seventeen and could rebottom chairs, resole shoes, dig, and work in a sweat-shop, no doubt. That he happened to have a mentality created for higher things made no difference. Those were the trades taught him, and he was expected to use them gratefully. Did they prove too unremunerative to feed him, then he must starve. Positions of trust are

not open to those whom the State has "reformed"! When a boy has once become an inmate of a Reformatory his name is irretrievably smirched. But if he changes that name in order to start life afresh, he may be cast in prison for that act alone.

Brawn and not brain is what is expected and wanted by the public from an ex-inmate. If through lack of proper food, fresh air, or as a result of brutal treatment he had been robbed of his brawn, that fact does not count. Even if he has by chance really been reformed, and longs with all the manhood and pride in him to "go straight," such a longing avails him little. He is of the "criminal class", and as such must accept any sort of a position he can get, perhaps through the instrumentality of some organization for this purpose. He must be eternally thankful to Society for this privilege; and not caring how often the police make him lose his job through their constant houndings, he must report once a month to the Parole Officer. In order to keep his freedom, it is essential that he have an honest job. Through his employer's signature attesting this fact, he must convince the doubting officer that he is "going straight." If he does all these things and is never *seen* in bad company, or under suspicious circumstances, he may—and he may not—live out the term of his parole without returning to the Reformatory!

But Stanley had learned well his lessons in deceit. Though he proceeded to work during the day, he managed somehow, in spite of watchful officers, to surreptitiously join a well-known Fagin's gang in the underworld, and at odd hours practiced upon Society that which Society had paid to have him taught!

Being exceedingly clever he was thus able to live out the time before his majority, when his sentence at the Reformatory ended. But even a clever pickpocket is seldom safe, provided of course he is not a particu-

lar friend of the police or a member of a family whose financial status is good! It was not long after this therefore, when Stanley, in spite of his cleverness, entered perforce a still higher school—the Penitentiary, which is the preparatory grade for our highest curriculum in crime—State's Prison!

It was at this stage in his life that a totally new thought came to him. Under the guise of right—or its supposed mate, religion—he had beheld only unrighteousness and hypocrisy. Hidden by reform he had witnessed human beings degraded until they became bestial. Yet he knew intuitively that right must prevail in the world, and therefore began to wonder whether, if he lived honestly and rightly, he could not be really free? He was sick of the shadow of prisons; and though he had no higher motive than his own physical well-being, he determined that upon his being freed from the Penitentiary he would really try to live a life of honesty according to the best lights he had.

The characteristic of hope, derived from his father, yet seldom coming uppermost in him, now blossomed again. He felt much as he had on that day, so many miserable years before, when having succeeded in being sent from the Home of His Lost Sheep he had looked forward to a life of happiness in the Reform School. At the conscious memory of how bitterly he had been disappointed then, his heart now misgave him; but only temporarily. *Then*, he argued, he had not tried to live right. He had even gained his release from one institution and his entrance into another through purposeful wrong doing. Surely if a man honestly tried to live right and thus better himself, he must succeed! He would go back to the Home and free the little Lion. With that poor creature's love and loyalty to act as an incentive, he would, he knew he would, succeed!

CHAPTER XV

MARJORY, under the wing of her ambitious mother and with her maiden name to protect her from "what people would say," had been living a life of ease and apparent happiness on the proceeds of the discovery made by the mining expert before Stanley's birth. Returning to their old home in Virginia she had lived there, never daring to touch any part of the money which she had received from Sam Simmons's dying hands. She had told no one, not even her mother, of that experience, nor of the child's living existence. Little Stanley, after her one visit to him, had dropped out of her life.

She had in no way attempted to communicate with her husband. He was as dead in her estimation as he was in that of his country. Her mother thought, as everyone else did, that Marjory had put the whole miserable experience of her marriage behind her. She was still young; she was pretty. Life had not been fair to her! This new opportunity for happiness through worldly affluence had doubtless been offered as compensation. Eagerly seizing it, with no thought for the future and no personal regrets for the past, she had lived from hour to hour, occasionally salving her conscience with small acts of good-natured kindness, but in general her conduct was absolutely self-absorbed. With plenty of money to satisfy her desire for luxuries, for a while she reveled in the joy of it, feeling she must thus be happy. In a whirl of excitement over the admiration which she found was freely bestowed upon her by nearly every man she met, her mind for several years forgot its burden of worry. That part of her nature inherited from her mother was ever uppermost. As is the case with many women

such as she, women possessed of mentality and imagination but who have had no real mental or spiritual training, she expended her whole time, energy, and thought upon the aborted ambition of acquiring pretty clothes and social prominence.

For this ambition in woman man is largely responsible. The more her luxuries set off her beauty and enhance her physical charm, the more sweetly womanly she appears in his eyes. Therefore a man will often deny himself personal necessities in order to give such luxuries to a woman. He looks upon a handsomely gowned member of his family rather as a being of his own creation—her charms so framed represent to the world the state of his bank account and subtly announce that he has achieved "success." So it is that many a woman's better self has slumbered on under the influence of comforts and coddlings, little realizing the big things there are in the world for her to do.

And so it was with Marjory. Under the dominion and influence of her mother, whose silly worldliness increased in a given ratio with the flabbiness beneath her chin and the grayness of her hair, Marjory continued to throw herself into the round of social activities and gaieties, to buy clothes, determined to drown thoughts of the past in the belief that she was in this way finding happiness. Yet in spite of her determination a time finally came when a restlessness that she herself did not understand began to develop in her. Notwithstanding her mother's oft-repeated admonitions that intellectual women were abhorrent to men, and that the only way a woman could be happy was to blossom in the sunlight of their all-powerful smiles, Marjory took to study and reading, quickly developing a real pleasure and understanding in this higher pursuit. Yet she dared not let others know of it, fearing their criticism.

It was not long after this that she began to feel the old-time impatience of her mother, triple grown, again possessing her. This lady's continual prattle about clothes and their essential importance, her thousand and one petty jealousies and aimless ambitions, distressed the awakening Marjory. They acted however as a spur on her intellectual qualities which, though still half dormant in her, were nevertheless very real. Though she continued to practice the parent-bred coquetry which was her mother's pride and joy, behind her limpid, dark-lashed blue eyes, as appealing as a child's, a mental keenness and knowledge of things as they really are had begun to grow. A close observer might often have detected a spark of thoughtful amusement in their depths as they were raised with purposeful trustfulness to those of some male admirer. Though the fair face would still involuntarily droop, flowerlike, at his approach, there was a growing firmness to be noticed about the delicate chin, and the air of false modesty might be understood as only a part of those mannerisms which her mother had cultivated in her. The fair hair curling about the white temples was still babylike in its clinging softness; and yet in the breadth of brow beneath it, and in the delicate almost imperceptible lines about the mouth, there was shown a character of strong will which few would have suspected. The same quality of almost pathetic wistfulness which had drawn Denneth to her on that night of their first meeting was still present beneath her outward gaiety. Yet a subtle sadness, sprung from her hours of silent suffering, lent age to her youthful face. About her whole presence and address there was now a sureness of manner which comes with maturity alone.

Held enough beneath the spell of her early training to still care for the admiration that was hers, she

nevertheless began to compare the admiring glances of older and more worldly men she now knew with those of the pure-eyed boy of her past. In these moods, though hating Denneth as a thief who had ruined her life, she recalled his devotion. Their courtship and honeymoon, spent for the most part among the birds and flowers, returned to haunt her. With a growing understanding which was born of experience she learned to appreciate how absolutely pure and high had been his love. She said angrily to herself that she could never and would never forgive him! She did not care in the least what had become of him during all these years! Yet deep in her heart she knew that she thought of him with ever increasing frequency.

Her restlessness steadily grew, and thinking to quell this disquieting emotion she continued to resort to her mother's balm of healing for every woe. Throwing herself into the social life about her, she would be all that her fond parent wished for several weeks at a time, and then coming out from these experiences, the conviction would possess her that such a life was utterly wasteful and wrong. Sick at heart and tired of the fruitlessness of it all she would return to her books, hoping there to find the true happiness that her nature sought.

The thought of her boy came at such times to torment her. In every child she passed she imagined she saw a likeness to him. She longed to talk with children—to take them upon her knee—to pour out upon them some part of the mother love that she knew she possessed in no small degree. Yet because she still believed she had done right in leaving Stanley at the orphanage, and because, too, she was not willing to suffer any emotional distress, she dared not let a child come near her. She became, to all appearances, cold

and hard wherever they were concerned. But with burning eyes she watched them, her heart crying out in spite of her reason that through them, and him, she might find happiness.

Marjory had finally come to understand the true meaning of the alms-basket of the Home of His Lost Sheep. She wondered why she had not learned the truth before. Her former ignorance upon the subject seemed almost unbelievable to her now. The knowledge that any orphanage was used for the purpose of hiding sin was abhorrent to her. She wondered if her own little son was thought to be one of those poor little derelicts of shame. With increasing agony of mind this idea continually recurred to her, yet she could not help but believe that the course she had taken in hiding Stanley's parentage was a good one. In spite of the fact that she had taken pains to read nothing on the subject of orphanages, her mind would insist upon recalling remarks which she had heard dropped by others, and which were derogatory to those institutions; but she had refused to believe any of those tales relating to the mistreatment of children. The happiest part of her own life had been spent among the Sisters at the Convent. Women, therefore, who had little children in their charge, surely loved them and were kind to them. Yet so unhappy was she, so restless and full of the eternal questions arising from her past life, that she often felt she must surely be possessed of two personalities—the coquette the world knew, and the woman she was making of herself through the cultivation of her mind. More frequently than ever there came the longing for her little boy. In the deep of the night she would awake to feel the clutch of his clinging fingers—the warmth of his soft lips upon her breast! Yet the next day no woman she knew seemed so thoroughly a part of the aimless por-

tion of Society which calls itself "SOCIETY" as she was herself.

The hallucination of Stanley's nearness grew daily more acute. Years passed. Her vain self-watching saw her dainty beauty begin to fade. Her better self, the self that was secretly coming to appreciate Denneth's worth, made her careless of this fact. Gradually it began to come over her that she was made for better things. But even yet, in spite of her mental suffering, she lacked the moral courage to do other than drift along in the current of least resistance. At times weakly struggling against her mother's influence, she nevertheless continued to allow it to control her life, although her spiritual development had so far progressed that she was vaguely conscious that she was doing wrong.

Gradually there was rekindled in her an ambition which she had sometimes felt in her girlhood. Never having found expression for her better self, the idea of writing the fairy stories which she had often dreamed now began to shape itself in her mind. From the reading of other people's books she took to the stimulant of trying to write one of her own. Had Marjory kept her little son close to her heart, this ambition for creating, no doubt, would never have entered her life. She was not by nature either a student or one who wished to force her opinions upon the world; but because she was spiritually superior to the position in which she found herself, it now seemed absolutely necessary that she express that part of her nature which her mother had always kept in subjection.

Locking herself into her room she began to write. Had her friends known this, her secret, they would have made her life miserable. A woman who is entirely successful as a goddess of fashion must have no such interests. Though she must be a brilliant con-

versationalist, she must take pains to be so on the subject of nothing at all!

Marjory, working upon her little secret volume, longed to tell someone of her efforts. Yet she dared not do so, and must needs find this respite from her unhappiness and restlessness only behind locked doors. But the very effort she was making brought to her starved nature the feeling that now she was surely attaining her long sought-for goal. The dainty stories grew—stories written for little children. In them Marjory poured out the whole wealth of her mother love.

Mrs. Matthews finding that her daughter was refusing many invitations to affairs to which only the élite were invited became suspicious. Snooping around in a way which would be considered dishonorable had she been other than Marjory's mother, she discovered Marjory's concealed hope for happiness. A scene ensued in which Marjory, though called all the pet names in the calendar, was made to understand she simply must not continue this absolutely unladylike performance!

Notwithstanding this Marjory's little book soon grew to completion. Its acceptance and subsequent publication gave her the greatest happiness she had known since those autumnal days spent with Denneth among the flaming trees. Much to her surprise even her mother's displeasure seemed to have gradually subsided; for she, dear soul, discovered that her beautiful daughter had gained even more of a foothold in social circles than had been the case before. Bored hostesses busily returning obligations were only too glad to make of Marjory a lion—the smiling “goat” for their stupid parties.

But the little book had not satisfied Marjory's restlessness. Her heart was heavy within her;

and though the siren laughter that lured men to candied and flowered financial destruction was ever upon her lips, in her own heart she realized that her life was still as empty as ever. There surely must be some road to happiness, she thought continually. Had she made a mistake in putting her past behind her? The baby face of her little son came up before her in answer. And Denneth? Had she been absolutely fair to him? She had given him no chance to explain. Perhaps he might have been able to explain, and to her entire satisfaction! In angry impatience she put these thoughts away! Denneth had ruined her happiness! He *deserved* what he had gotten, whatever it was. She must find some other way to fill her life!

Her mother, of course, had always been an active worker in any local church wherever she had found herself—that is of course, if that church was noted for its aristocracy either of blood or money. This lady did not go to communities, however, where there were churches of an “inferior” order. Before she condescended to enter the honored gates of any town, she must needs know that it was worthy of her sojourn there. Mrs. Matthews belonged to the class of American tourists who travel, not to see the world, but to let the world see *them!* She had been born, too, with the sort of mentality which demands that we approach our Maker, the Father of Him who was a carpenter, in bejeweled, incensed pomp and show. This proclivity had gained in accordance with the dizzy height of her social attainments. Yellow gold mixed with blue blood and religion can attain great results.

Marjory, who had loved church and chapel during her convent days among the gentle Sisters, gradually came to hate it. Searching for happiness she had, during all these years of her unhappiness, run the whole gamut of religion and even fanaticism. In

turn she had tried Catholic, High Church Episcopals, Blue-stocking Mediums, all the *isms* and several of the Sciences! None had brought her rest. Then one day she was talking to Mary Anna who, faithful soul, had stood by her little mistress through thick and thin. Since Mrs. Matthews's good fortune, this tropical flower had acted as Marjory's personal maid. She was proud of her promotion from a slavey of all work, and held herself accordingly. It was during this conversation with her that Marjory struck the key-note of that future which was destined to turn her life from one of aimlessness into one of serious purpose.

Mary Anna coming into Marjory's room one morning was shocked to see the mistress she loved weeping.

"Holy Lamb o' Gawd, chile!" she exclaimed, putting the breakfast tray down and hurrying toward the bed in sympathetic alarm. "What in dis perishin' world's de matter?"

At the sound of the woman's entrance Marjory had tried to still the emotion that had engulfed her; and so now, sitting up and stuffing the pillow behind her, she said:

"Oh nothing much, Mary Anna. Just the blues, I reckon," and she smiled up through her tears into the kindly dark face, motioning Mary Anna to place the tray upon her knees.

"Humph, de 'reds' is what I'd call it ef you axes me, bein's I'se lookin' at yo' eyes an' nose! What ails you anyhow? You ain't sick?"

Marjory shook her head.

"None o' you' gemman-friends done los' deir taste for you—is dey?" Mary Anna asked again, looking really distressed this time.

Marjory laughed, but continued shaking her head.

"Well, yo' ma ain't been praisin' up yo' cloes and thoein' off on yo' brains, has she?"

"No, Mary Anna," Marjory said, "I told you it was just the blues."

Mary Anna grunted.

"Well doan' yer let her worry yer. Yo' books is bound to be unnoticeable, and nobody ain't goin' ter be no wiser after readin' dem nohow, so you jes' 'muse yo'se'f dat way all you pleases in spite of her critiosticism."

Marjory smiled up into the other's anxious face. "Mary Anna," she said abruptly and off the point, "I've been lying here thinking of religion. The kind I know seems too small for my big troubles. What do you think about it?"

"Lamb o' Gawd, chile!" the other exclaimed, surprised at the turn the conversation had taken; "you knows I'se a Christian all wool and a yard wide. I believes Marse Jonah swallowed de whale, and Marse Moses discovered real estate befo' de Israelites did. Likewise I believes Miss Eve ate an Adam's apple, an' all sich Holy words. But hit do seem to me dat 'ligion was made fer dressy occasions and not fer troubles. If hit had been made fer troubles, does yer think it would give us poor sinners so much trouble to *keep* it? Why, I have more trouble tryin' to keep my 'ligion than ef I didn't have none! Spring o' the year come 'long and de sap in my bones begins to feel all creepy an' full o' joy. I sees a handsome buck nigger, an' he axes me to go to de Sunday School picnic. Now, chile, you knows as well as I does dat Sunday School picnics ain't no place in which to sass de Lawd by dancin'. But putty soon me an' dat buck nigger hears music an' our foots jes' naturally gits so ticklish we begins to cut de pigeon wing. De fust thing I knows I'se done los' my 'ligion and is turned outen de church!"

During this soliloquy Marjory had finished her

breakfast, and taking the pins from her hair she now let it fall about her in a golden shower. To see her thus in the softened light no one would have guessed the years which had passed over her since the date of her marriage.

Mary Anna bustled about the room getting Marjory's morning toilette in readiness. Her rambling talk while thus employed was a daily amusement to Marjory, and she never tired of leading her on. So now she did nothing which by any chance might interrupt her.

"Yas-sah," Mary Anna went on, "'ligion's a pow'ful troublesome thing. Hit tells yer to undo all dem things which you'se about to do, and to leave done all dat which nobody on Gawd's yearth wants to do no-how. Still I believes in 'ligion and I shouted hard, I tell yer, to git mine! I doan' know nothin' 'bout cyards, but eve'y now an' den when a crap game doan' 'zactly seem to satisfy my longin's, I plays a leetle, jes' a leetle sort of a game dat is sinful fer niggers and stylish fer white folks—I learnt it from yo' ma."

"But Holy Lamb o' Gawd, jes' as sho' as you'se born, ef I indulges my carcass in a leetle reconciliation like dat, Brudder Jones of de Methusalem Methodist Church prerambulates 'long—an' I'se done turned outen de church agin! Neberdeless I believes in 'ligion; but somehow or udder hit ought to be mo' full of love an' kindness dan it are. Love is de thing, honey—

"But what's de matter, chile?" she broke off as she happened to notice Marjory's paleness. "You'se sick!" in an accusing tone.

"No, I'm not, Mary Anna, just a little headachy
—"

"I knowed it!" the other exclaimed, dropping the fluffy rose and white gown she had been taking from

the closet, and going over to the bed. "Heah, let me put some o' dis cologne on yo' po' haid," and she picked up a silver perfume bottle from the table near by.

"No, please," Marjory begged like a child, "I don't think I could stand that today. Suppose you give me that little bottle down there on the bottom shelf of the closet. "There!" pointing as the other moved across the room toward the closet's open door.

"Dar ain't no bottle heah, 'cepting dis one, chile," Mary Anna's voice sounded from the depths of the closet. Then coming out into the light, she held aloft a large square bottle marked Gin.

"That's the one," Marjory said. "Wet my handkerchief and lay it on my forehead. That seems to help sometimes."

Mary Anna obeyed; but could not refrain from remarking:

"Never heard of usin' gin befo' fer haidache. But doctors an' white folks has pow'ful queersome notions dese days. Why, I heared yestiddy dat dar's a light called the X Y Z days—or something like dat—dat germans kin look *right thu ladies wid!* Ain't it scandalous? And ladies lets 'em do it! Holy Lamb, what *is* we a-comin' to anyway, as I reemarked to de german friend dat was my husband so to speak, befo' I took fer wusser and not better dis good-fer-nothin', no-count, lazy cuss dat I'se halted to now!"

Marjory lay smiling, her headache almost forgotten. Finally she said in explanation, before the garrulous soul could catch her breath to continue:

"This isn't gin, Mary Anna; it's witch-hazel. I broke my witch-hazel bottle."

"Good Gawd, Miss Marjory," Mary Anna said, her eyes bulging, "I might have *killed myse'f!*"

A peal of Marjory's merry laughter broke out at

this self-revealing remark, and then suddenly sobering, her eyes dilated in suppressed nervousness, she said:

"Mary Anna, do you remember years ago when—Mr. Richardson—deserted me—and—"

"Now chile, doan yer talk about dat disagreeableness. Dat wuz too long ago to reckomember. No gemman, whedder he *deeserted* or didn't *dcesert* you, is worth scrambling yo' brains over dat long! 'Sides dat, folks doan know nothin' about hit nohow. I thought you yo'se'f had done forgot hit—I has! What about dat ole Jedge Sawyer you met at dat Maine Hotel las' summer? Him dat seemed to git de gazin' sickness in connection wid yo' 'shy blue opnics', as he say. Him dat taken sech a fancy to you dat he say to me he wished he were yo' father! Father nothin'!" and she laughed. "And dat udder gemman —de English one—him whose handle, as you might say, was blasphemous—'Lord' Sydenham? What 'bout him? Yo' ma acted jes like 'Polnarus over him, she wuz dat gushin'! An' all dem udder suitors who ain't nobody in particular? Law, gal, doan you begin to reckomember—reckomembing is what turned Lot's wife into a bolster of Epsom salts. Hit ain't safe. Let doggones be doggones, as de Good Book say."

"But Mary Anna, I've *got* to talk to somebody about it all. I've simply got to!" Marjory said, deadly serious in spite of the other's remarks. Then tears coming to her eyes, she continued: "Oh Mary Anna, you don't know, nobody knows, how I've suffered all these years! I feel as though I had reached the place where I couldn't stand it another minute! *Somebody* must help me to decide what to do."

At her words, and the tears over-brimming her eyes, Mary Anna instantly became all solicitude and sympathy. Dropping the filmy lingerie she had just re-

moved from a drawer, and going over to the bed again, she threw herself upon her knees by Marjory's side.

"My po' chile," she cooed, her soft black hands smoothing the curls back from Marjory's flushed face. "Tell me anything in Gawd's world yer wants, honey. I'm a-listenin' like a telephone. You *knows* I'd he'p you from de bottom of my very las' dollar if needces-sary. What's troublin' you?"

CHAPTER XVI

FOR several moments Marjory lay very still, her big child-like eyes looking steadily into those of the woman by her side. Mary Anna's shiny orbs in turn gazed faithfully back. Then, catching her breath with a sob, Marjory asked slowly, articulating her every word until it was a clean cut staccato:

"Mary Anna, if you had a little son and you wanted him to grow up into a good and holy man, and you felt he could not do so under your influence because of his father's disgraced name, what would you do with him?"

Mary Anna's face drew itself into puzzled lines; but shaking her head she said simply: "I ain't much at kadrumnumms, honey. My brains is kinder like 'lasses, chile, kinder like 'lasses," and her eyes asked in dumb pleading that her ignorance be forgiven.

"Would you give him away? Would you put him in an orphan asylum for other women to bring up into honest manhood?" Marjory asked more simply, her face becoming drawn and white with the effort of this question.

"No sahree, ma'am, I sholy would *not* put him in no orpham-size-um!" Mary Anna answered emphatically. "No, ma'am!"

Marjory's face went even whiter at this answer; and it was only with the greatest effort that she was able to ask faintly, "Why not, Mary Anna?"

"Caze orpham-size-ums is dirty; dey's made fer po' white trash, an' sinners. 'Sides all dat, honey, no baby chiles is got any business bein' took away from its ma. Orpham-size-ums is agin nater. Hit doan seem to make so much differbitterance about chillens havin'

Pas. Pas is jes' sort of a social-like decoration anyhow; but *mas* is a needcessary. Baby-chiles need sof' bosoms fer to rock-a-by on—dey needs lovin' hands to tuck 'em in at night, and lovin' lips fer to teach 'em to talk, lovin' knees fer to lean aginst while bein' learnt lessons in worldly wizzum, and lovin' eyes fer to watch 'em grow! In udder words, as Brudder Jones says when he is argufyin' wid Gawd on Sundays, dey need *love* jes' like de flowers needs sun an' rain fer to make 'em grow straight an' strong. You axed me 'bout 'ligion. Well, honey, *love* is de 'ligion mos' of us needs mos' in dis ole contrary plant of a world. If chillens is gave love, de Lawd 'tends to de res'! An' if you ever seed the internal workin's of an orpham-size-um, you'd know dar warn't no love dar'."

Marjory lay very still, her eyes staring straight ahead of her. This ignorant woman's homely words, so full of the essence of truth, had reached deep down in her and taken hold of her heart strings as nothing else had done during the years since she had parted from her little son. There came to her the terrible knowledge that she had made a mistake. She realized that had she allowed herself to think about it, she would have known this fact before.

Was there no other way than the one which she had chosen? Could she not have kept her little son and influenced him so that he would have grown up to be a good man in spite of his heredity?

There came to her mind the story of a pretty village girl who, while working for Mrs. Matthews during Marjory's childhood, had given birth to a child. The town authorities promptly declared their intention of taking it away from its bewildered mother, who was, of course, immediately turned from Mrs. Matthews's employ. Given nothing better to do than to go the regulation way of many no worse than she, the girl

had, nevertheless, not only emphatically refused to accept such a fate, but refused also to be separated from her baby.

By devoting her whole thought and devotion to the bringing up of it, together they had both slowly climbed back into an unobtrusive respectability and place in the life of the town about them. The child consistently shielded by its mother from any expressed disgrace grew into sweet maidenhood, then wifehood, feeling little of the stigma which the circumstances of her birth had fastened upon her.

Marjory went over the scenes of her own baby's birth and the ensuing four weeks spent together in the hospital. A veritable agony of self-reproach gripped her. Entirely forgetting the element of unselfishness which, though mistaken, had been very real at the time, Marjory now called herself a deserter of her boy—a selfish egotist who had thought chiefly of her own comfort and convenience! If she had been truly unselfish, she now argued, if she had been really desirous of protecting little Stanley, could she not have done so without forcing him to forfeit his birthright? Self-scorn burned and seared her soul. If this village girl who had neither friends nor financial influence to stand between her and Society's finger of scorn had brought *her* child up to respected maturity, how infinitely easier it would have been for Marjory to have protected Stanley! With money and time at her command she could have kept the secret of his father's disgrace from him. Lavishing the wealth of her love upon him, she could have influenced his development for good. Mary Anna's words fairly screamed their way through her mind. The negress was right. Nothing in the world could be so good for a child as the love and good influence of one who belonged to him through the tie of blood.

The stories she had heard against orphan asylums returned to her mind. Yet, try as she would, she could not bring herself to believe that any women with the care of children would be cruel to their charges. But suppose those in the Home of His Lost Sheep had neglected her boy? Suppose they had actually mistreated him?

She could stand it no longer. Almost choking with the unwonted beating of her heart, she suddenly sat up, exclaiming:

"Mary Anna, I've been a selfish, blind fool! If you knew what I have done—the terrible, inexcusable thing I did years ago, you'd hate me!"

"Law, Miss Marjy, chile," Mary Anna said soothingly, "doan excite yo'se'f like dat. Dar, dar," and shaking up the pillows she stuffed them cosily back of Marjory, continuing: "Why jes' listen to yo' bream. You'se fairly takin' hit in 'short pants,' as the middle-seated gemman in the nigger minstrel-show says," chuckling at her wit. "Eve'ybody knows you never done nothing wrong in yo' sweet life! You'se jes' been a putty flower growin' in the gyarden of luxury, jes' a real leetle lady wid manners like a queen——"

Marjory broke in upon her impatiently. "Yes, that's exactly what I have been—a 'flower in a garden of luxury.' But the flower is a rank weed, Mary Anna. The whole socially constructed garden of luxury is made up of rank weeds, and those weeds steal over into the garden of usefulness and sap its strength and vigor. Weeds are parasites, Mary Anna——"

"Holy Lamb, chile, you talks like one o' dem female womens dat calls demse'fs suffergettes. Fer Gawd's sakes, doan *you* begin no sech sheenanykin! Mens is lazy and bombosterous enough as 'tis widout gittin' the idee dat deir lady friends and *dependents* is hankerin' fer work as well as chillens——"

"I *am* a suffragist, if suffrage means that idle, silly, useless women like I am will disappear from the face of the earth," Marjory broke in. "What have I ever done to help anything or anybody? Nothing! What good have I ever been? None! Have I ever tried to take a big helpful outlook on life? No. A broad horizon and a big way of looking at things is man's business! My business is to look pretty—being a member of the sex through which the world is peopled I must attract the male. Must pander to him—must spend my time, according to Mama, fascinating and fooling him! I've been nothing, nothing, nothing, but a pretty doll! An unhappy slave of what 'people will say'! Oh, I hate myself!" And flinging herself down among her lacy pillows she entirely lost control of her emotions.

"Why Marjory! My *dear* love!" an angry voice exclaimed, as a highly perfumed feminine flower of rustling silks and satins was wafted into the room. "This is the most outrageous conversation I've ever heard! Writing that book has simply gone to your head! I suppose you think now that you are a 'new woman,' and that you can express yourself in all sorts of vulgar, unladylike ways!"

Marjory sat bolt upright. "Mama, I wonder if you've ever realized that I'm thirty years old. Don't you think it's about time I am allowed to express some opinions of my own? I am useless. I'm worse than useless——"

But she got no further. Mrs. Matthews broke in with a torrent of affectionate abuse. "Why, my love, what in the world do you mean by speaking like this to me, your adoring mother? What do you suppose people would say if they heard you? Haven't I given you every luxury? Haven't I made you one of the most talked-of beauties in Virginia? What other

woman has had so many accomplished men at her feet, as has my little love? Had so many chances to make a really good match? You managed to spoil your early life by a wilful marriage, a marriage I was opposed to from the very first—the man had no money—and now though I have urged you to break that marriage and enter into an advantageous one, you have pig-headedly, yes pigheadedly, my love—not a pretty word, but expressive—you have pigheadedly refused to follow my advice!"

By now Marjory had gotten out of bed. Standing up in front of her mother, she threw her head back defiantly. "Mama, that will *do!* I won't listen. Furthermore I have something to say to *you*. I know it's going to make a break between us. I've known it for a long time; but though I *have* been a coward, I'm one no longer. I must speak!"

Mrs. Matthews here tried to interrupt; but waving her words aside, Marjory continued:

"When I married Denneth Richardson, I loved him. I was willing to do without any amount of comforts and luxuries in order to marry him. I think I showed that in—the choice I made between him and another man, a man so much too good for me, by the way, that it makes me ashamed even yet to—"

But angrily breaking in upon her daughter Mrs. Matthews said commandingly to the maid who had continued her work about the room, "Mary Anna, go out into the hall."

But to her mother's astonishment Marjory commanded quickly: "Mary Anna, remain. Get all my traveling things together, please; and yours, too—Pardon me, Mama. I will say out my say.

"We went to housekeeping, Denneth and I. You came to live with us. Nothing pleased you; but being still beneath your influence, I, like the fool I was,

began to see things once more from your point of view and not from my own or Denneth's."

Her mother attempted to interrupt again—but again compelling her attention, Marjory continued:

"Oh, I'm not trying to excuse myself. I know I was to blame for letting you influence me, but it had become a habit with me! Well, then my little baby was about to come—" here a sob rose in her throat, and with an effort she kept back the tears. "You no more made me understand the sacredness of God's gift to me then than you had explained the sacredness and true meaning of marriage before. My better self began to occasionally whisper that I was playing a foolish game; but refusing to pay heed to these warnings, as you know, I continued to think of nothing but clothes and the things I had been brought up to worship—worldly possessions. As I look back upon it all now I wonder how Denneth stood it.

"Oh, I'm not trying to excuse *him* either," as her mother once more angrily broke in. "I've told you that I would never see nor hear from him again. I've kept my word. But what I *am* saying is this: You had so filled me, so hypnotized me, with the idea of what 'people would say,' that when things became—when things were at their worst, I—I—"

But here she broke down completely, flinging herself face down upon the bed, unable to proceed and turning away from her mother.

This gave Mrs. Matthews the desired opening, and calling down upon Marjory's head maledictions interspersed with pet names, this incensed matron demanded an answer to the question, "How *dare* her daughter, her dear little love, say such things to her!" and noisily rustling from the room she left behind her a trail of perfume stronger than her customarily sweetened words—a perfume which always indicated her where-

abouts as surely as did that given by bounteous nature to an animal less easily tolerated than she!

Jumping up Marjory rushed to the door, calling after her: "Mama, come back!"

Then as that lady continued her haughty way down the hall in spite of Marjory's request, Marjory said in a hard, deliberate voice that did not sound at all like her own:

"If you don't come back I'll call out to you what I was going to say! It isn't a credit to either of us——"

She got no further. The threat was sufficient. Mrs. Matthews came back, and entering the room closed the door. Seriously disturbed and anxious she took the chair Marjory pushed forward for her and listened silently while the latter said, holding herself bravely in hand:

"I told you my baby had died. He did not. He is probably living to-day."

At this bit of news Mrs. Matthews, white and shaking, rose from her seat. The negro woman, eyes popping from her head, had dropped her task and hurrying over at the look of fury on Mrs. Matthews's face, now stood near Marjory in much the attitude of a mother bear determined to protect her cubs. Mrs. Matthews was so angry that Mary Anna felt a vague fear lest she try to harm her beloved mistress.

Marjory looking her mother squarely in the eyes, continued coldly: "Yes, I deceived you. For once in my life I acted on my own initiative—— But do not be alarmed. The cowardice which is convention bred in most girls of my class was strong enough in me to make me desert my boy! I put him in an orphan asylum. I believed then it was the right thing to do—but, of course, that's beside the mark. There was so much about poor Denny—the disgrace and all——"

Mrs. Matthews's face had taken on a look of relief. Seeing this, however, Marjory lost her self-control and angrily exclaimed:

"But I'll tell you this, Mother: To-night I start for New York to take him out of that loveless place in which he may even now be suffering. From henceforth I am forever done with this useless life you have given me, and—and—" her voice breaking while the tears coursed unheeded down her cheeks, "I will yet be happy with my boy! I'm going to help him grow into a good man, in spite of his heredity. These years of suffering have taught me much, Mama. I believe I know life's true value better now."

At these, her own words, her heart suddenly softened towards her mother, and she said in all honesty of purpose: "Oh, D. D.," using the pet initials she had used toward her mother during babyhood, but which she had not indulged in for many years, "let's start afresh! Our little boy, your grandson whom you have never seen, needs us. He needs our love, and we need his, D. D. There *must* be more happiness in life than we've yet found—"

But she got no further. Mrs. Matthews, who had throughout this entire recital uttered no word, was now no longer able to control herself. Her eyes, too, were full of tears, but they were those of an exceedingly angry woman. Half choking and fairly sputtering with rage, she said:

"Do you mean to say, my love, that after you have lied to the world, cheated and deceived it, passed off as an unencumbered widow, played the part of an innocent lamb, that now you will suddenly produce a great big boy from out of nowhere and say to the world, 'Oh, didn't you know I had a son? Well, you see his father was a thief and so I put the child in an orphan asylum. But now I've decided that his hered-

ity makes no difference, and so, dear kind friends, just accept him among you socially and let's say no more about it!" Marjory, do you think you can do a fool thing like that?" Then her sarcastic anger giving way to self-pity, she moaned:

"Oh, it's such a disgrace. What *will* people say?"

By now Marjory was furious. "Mother," she said between closely held lips, "that will do!"

Her mother, paying no heed, went on piteously, wringing her bejeweled hands: "And I thought I had you almost married to a lord! Think of it, my love! You would have been a Lady, a real Lady——"

"Humph!" Mary Anna mumbled disrespectfully, "like she ain't already dat!"

"And now you are going to spoil it all by this damnable nonsense!" Then Mrs. Matthew's indignation growing into white heat, she exclaimed convulsively: "You just *shall* not do it!" and in spite of the fact that she stamped her foot like a tragedy queen, she very much resembled a spoiled child bent on having its own way. Stepping over to the door, she locked it and, putting the key in her pocket, whirled upon her daughter. "What do you suppose people would say if you suddenly had no money? Do you think you would be so popular, so sought after, so admired, if *my* money wasn't back of you?" Then losing in her anger what little dignity she possessed, she said, "You wilful little hussy! I thought you might do something *fool*—yes fool, my dear, not a pretty word, but expressive, and so the money is all in *my* name. Do you understand that, Marjory 'Richardson'?"

Marjory went white. "So you advise me leaving my son in a place where he is not happy, and where I do not feel at all sure of the influence being good?" she asked scornfully. "You, his *grandmother*, con-

sider the opinion of ‘people’ more important than my son’s birthright of happiness——”

“You put him there, didn’t you?”

Marjory winced.

“You should have thought of his happiness before you did it! There’s one thing certain now, and that is that you can’t take him out and bring him *here*. People would talk!”

Marjory, white to the lips with anger, stood over her mother threateningly, but said in a perfectly calm voice: “That will not stop me. Nor will lack of money stop me. Nothing will stop me! Besides which I have got money. I have money my *husband* gave me!” and she emphasized the word.

Until this conversation Mrs. Matthews had never heard Marjory mention Denneth’s name since the date of his crime, and now she felt seriously alarmed. Tears, that weapon of women which has made history and changed the map of the world, came to her aid. Flopping limply back into her chair she allowed her nose to become reddened in a manner which would have even now distressed her outraged vanity had she stopped to think.

Marjory coldly turned to Mary Anna. “Mary Anna,” she said, “pack my things.” Then turning toward her mother again she said in quiet determination, enunciating every word: “I am going to New York to-night.”

Mrs. Matthews’s equinoctial storm broke. Weeping and scolding, she begged her “little love” to have mercy! Had that bugaboo, “people,” in fear of whom Mrs. Matthews lived, heard what she had to say from now on until the close of the scene, they certainly *would* have talked! But Marjory, filled with the inspiration of her newly discovered better self, was obdurate.

CHAPTER XVII

MARJORIE hurried toward the river. The sun shone down upon her, and striking the windows of the shabby houses along one side of the street, turned every pane of glass into a flaming beacon of hope. As this idea entered Marjory's mind she smiled at its significance and the thought that she was so soon to see her boy. She quickened her steps and went eagerly forward, intent only on reaching the Home of His Lost Sheep. As she passed the basket's alcove with its light in the shape of a star, she felt as though her heart must surely stop beating, so poignant had the memory become to her of that night of years before. Its every little detail returned, and she felt that it and not the present scene must surely be the reality through which she was even now living. The actual seemed far away and entirely unreal. She felt as though she had stepped back through the years to the time before she had parted with little Stanley. She was acutely conscious of his warm body against her breast—yet the real emptiness of her arms was even more acute! She breathed the baby perfume of his nearness. His little fingers clung to hers, and across the years she seemed to hear the tinkle of the bell which had been the signal of their separation. Then with a stab of anguish the reality of the present asserted itself.

She hurried rapidly on. Again a feeling of joy swept over her. Her arms would soon no longer be empty. Little fingers now growing big would really be clinging to hers! She reached the Home's gates and pressed the bell.

At her summons a burly watchman in uniform came forward and looked through the grating.

"Good afternoon, Miss. Is it after wanting to see anybody ye be?" he asked, as his beady eyes took in Marjory's rich attire.

"Yes, open the gate, please," Marjory answered. "I've come to see the matron."

The watchman hesitated. "But it's not after being a visitor's day today," doubtfully.

"But I wish to come in anyway," Marjory said in the imperious manner which much admiration had bred in her. "Open the gate, please."

For a moment more the man hesitated. He had not served as watchman in the Home of His Lost Sheep for nearly twenty years without knowing that a lady dressed as Marjory was dressed was not welcome there without due notice having been given of her coming. Rules were strict and food was scarce. As had been the case years before, a housekeeper who kept the bills down was considered an example of righteous perfection. Clothes, shoes, stockings, even soap and water, as well as food, came under the head of economies practiced, and except on visitors' days the children showed not the slightest sign of care or cleanliness. Except on such days important factors in State or Church did not happen along, and so no attempt was ever made to hide the filth and barrenness which daily surrounded the little lives within the Home.

The watchman knew he ought to keep Marjory from entering until a more propitious occasion. Yet of late there had been several well-dressed women demanding entrance at unexpected hours. These women had made it rather uncomfortable for those in authority at the Home when admission had been refused them. The watchman was therefore afraid to actually refuse Marjory entrance now. With the pretense of a rusty lock, he tried strategy:

"But it's after being sick I think the good matron is," fumbling clumsily with the lock.

"She probably isn't too sick to see me," Marjory said, waiting.

Their parley had attracted the attention of several of the children playing about the yard. Coming up they peered through the grating of the gate with big eyes which looked hollow and dark in their setting of drawn, white faces. The expression in them of sad wistfulness cut Marjory to the quick. The leader of the crowd was a boy about the age of her own son, she thought, judging from his size. Maybe it was he! Her heart quickened; but as quickly sank as she took note of his shabby condition. Could this be the little baby for whom she longed? He was a handsome little chap and did not look so ill as the rest.

"Good afternoon, children," she said, controlling the anxiety in her voice and forcing to the fore her most light-hearted and charming manner in spite of the distress she felt. "I'm coming in to see you."

At her words and unwonted show of interest in them the children one and all backed away. Standing at a safe distance they stared coldly, much as shy animals do at the approach of man. Like the little creatures of the woods the children had seldom met with anything but cruelty and misunderstanding from adults, so why should they accept Marjory's friendly advances now? She probably represented some new form of injustice to be meted out to them! Besides that, the stony gray of the asylum walls had entered their very souls, turning the natural trustfulness of childhood into the mistrust of middle age.

"What is the matter with that lock?" Marjory impatiently asked of the watchman. "If it's as rusty as it seems, you need a new one." But in spite of her annoyance at the man she continued to watch the

children as she spoke. Standing nearly across the yard now, their wide eyes stared at her as before.

Thinking that he could not fool or delay her longer, the watchman turned the key. Swinging back the gate he remarked pleasantly:

"It's not a rich place we be, Miss. Them little mouths," jerking his head back toward the still staring children, "is after taking all we can git to feed 'em."

Marjory entered. Crossing over to the children she said: "Aren't you going to make friends with me, children? I've come to see you." As she uttered these words her gaze swept over each of the boys, hoping, yet hardly daring, to see the locket of queer design swinging about one of their necks.

The children were silent.

"What's *your* name, dear?" she asked a tiny girl in the front of the group.

The little girl questioned only stared.

"Don't you know your name? Don't any of you know your names?" turning toward the others.

There was dead silence and Marjory's heart misgave her. How different, how terribly different were these silent children from the happy children of her friends! Were these dumb, staring creatures before her now those whom she had once imagined to be so happy and safe in this sheltering home? Were these they whom the Church and State were bringing up into useful maturity?

The dirty, stupid little faces stared at her. There was not the slightest emotion or understanding visible in any of them, but Marjory thought their eyes were searching her soul, and finding there that she was a mother who had deserted her child, to her imagination they now took on a look of dumb accusation! She could stand it no longer.

"Is any of you named—Stanley?" Her voice quivered, and she looked from one to the other of them.

She received no answer.

"Has any of you a locket about his neck? I'm looking for a little boy with a locket about his neck," and she forced a smile through her dry lips.

Still there was no answer; and turning, Marjory walked back to the watchman. "Is there any rule against these children talking to visitors?" she asked in her old impatience. "Why are they so silent? I can't get a word out of any of them!"

The watchman approached the children, his thick lips drawing themselves heavily back from his fang-like teeth in what he considered a smile, though its brutal quality made it perfectly plain that those lips were entirely unaccustomed to being put to such use.

"Childer," he said with an exaggerated show of kindness, "it's after talking to ye the pretty lady is. Where is them manners I be after teaching ye?" and with his back turned toward Marjory he gave the children a threatening, vicious scowl.

Staring coldly back at him and Marjory the children stood huddled together in sullen silence.

"Fer shame on ye," he continued; "ain't ye got no manners at-all, at-all?"

At Marjory's question about the locket a little hunchback had pushed his way forward through the group and now, in a high-pitched, nasal voice, he spoke.

"Me *kill* lions and chipmunks and kangaroos and spiders! Me kill him too when me get big boy," looking toward the watchman. "Whack!" and his fist came down on a tiny girl's head as his shrill, foolish laughter broke out. His loose lips dripped saliva as he rolled his eyes up at Marjory.

She shuddered. But the little half-wit now begin-

ning to cry, she forced down the repugnance created in her, and stooping forward said kindly:

"What's the matter, little boy?"

"Me wants him, me wants, me wants!" the Lion said wriggling convulsively. "Big boy tooken locket and went 'way. Me wants him. Me wants!"

The world went round for Marjory. She thought she must surely fall, must die, from the agony of sudden apprehension that flooded through her mind. But bracing herself she turned to the watchman:

"What is—that child's name?" she forced herself to ask. She would not have recognized her own voice. A possibility too horrible for words possessed her.

"It's not after knowing his name I be, Miss," the watchman answered, still made unlike his ordinary brutal self by the outward signs of Marjory's worldly possessions. "There's so many blooming kids here we number them you know, and kinder lose track of their names," he said. Then noticing Marjory's expression and translating it to mean indignation at this answer, he hastened to suggest:

"Wasn't it the matron ye was after seeing? Her it is that can tell you the whole of them's names. If ye'll just step this way with me, Miss, I'll show ye in," and he walked toward the asylum's entrance.

"You may tell the matron I am out here," Marjory said, giving the watchman her card. She longed to get rid of the man in order that she might question the children further. "If she is able to see me, I'll then come in."

The man hesitated; but again influenced by the indication of Marjory's wealth and social position as judged by her commanding manner, he dared not disobey her. Reluctantly he entered the building's main door!

Trembling with apprehension, yet strongly deter-

mined to face the future which she had so long avoided, Marjory turned again to the children.

"Do any of you know whether this little boy has got a locket?"

The sullen children still stared.

"Me wants Big Boy. Me wants him!" the Lion broke in irrelevantly.

Then seeing Marjory's bright mesh bag as its jeweled top caught and reflected the sunlight, he gurgled gleefully. Making a plunge toward her, he forgot entirely his former distress.

As his hands grasped her gown Marjory shrank away with an overwhelming sense of horror. Looking down into the idiotic, distorted face she felt as though her mind were giving way. The other children's faces became a blur. She shook with cold. Several times she tried to speak, but was unable to say aloud the words which were upon her lips.

Could what she feared be true? Could this poor, horrible little creature be the child of hers and Denneth's pure union? Things she had heard about criminals' children returned to make her apprehensions even more real. Too, she recalled the chaotic, destructive thought influence to which Stanley had been subjected just before his birth, during those days after Denneth's desertion of her and her subsequent flight to New York. She had heard somewhere that such things often did leave their stamp of mental degeneracy upon a child. She shuddered.

Deliberately throwing all these fears aside, however, she again studied the faces before her. She must not allow herself to believe such a thing until it could be proven. The matron doubtless knew which of the children was hers. Of course this little idiot could not be responsible for anything which he might say.

The largest boy of the group, the lad she had first

noticed, now suddenly smiled at her. Deep down in his manly little heart he had felt a stirring of interest and friendship toward the visitor. In spite of his Home-bred distrust of everyone, his heart warmed toward her, and the sullenness which characterized the other children left him.

Marjory's heart bounded as she caught this expression of friendliness. "Do you know this little boy's name?" she asked hopefully.

"His name is the Lion. We calls him that."

Marjory heaved a sigh of relief at the unfamiliar name, but went deadly pale as the lad continued:

"He did have a locket once, a funny-looking locket. I seen it on him," pointing toward the little hunchback, who was still playing with Marjory's glittering purse.

With a return of her apprehension, tenfold strengthened, Marjory felt a wild desire to make a bolt for the gate. Running through it she would put behind her forever the distressing face of the half-witted boy. In the same instant she realized that even though she gave way to cowardice, and deserted this child whom she now began to really believe was hers, she could never, so long as life lasted, forget that convulsed distorted face!

"Where—is your locket, Lion?" she bravely asked, forcing herself to address the little idiot. "Have you any other name besides Lyon?" hoping that this question might establish the idiot's relation to her as being purely a figment of her imagination.

"No, he ain't got no other name," the larger lad volunteered.

Marjory's eyes lighted with relief. "Well, is there any boy here whose name is Stanley? I'm looking for a boy named Stanley with a locket about his neck."

There was no answer, and her fears reviving again,

she said to the little Lion: "Show me your locket. What is it like?"

"Big Boy, he taken! Me wants. Me wants," he responded as her words penetrated his clouded brain and recalled his distress.

"Of whom does he speak when he says 'Big Boy,'" Marjory asked the larger lad.

"He means him that went to the Reform School," the lad answered. "He was kinder soft on the kid."

"Big Boy, me wants him, me wants!"

The other children standing about now began to lose their constraint. One of them giggled audibly at the reference to Stanley's infatuation for the little idiot.

Shuddering, Marjory turned again to the lolling-tongued child. "What was your locket like?" she asked. "Where is it now?"

But to all these questions she got but one answer; his distressed cry of wanting "Big Boy."

"It's you the matron is after asking to see," the watchman said, having come up behind Marjory without her knowledge. "Jes' come with me, Miss."

Leaving the group of children Marjory followed the man into the dingy Home, and soon found herself in the presence of a black garbed figure seated at a desk.

As the matron lifted her eyes to Marjory's, Marjory was shocked at the expression of her face. It was hard and cold to a degree which Marjory had never before encountered in a woman, and it was only with the greatest effort that she now addressed her as she had been taught to address a woman of her age. These formalities over, she continued simply:

"I have come to ask you about my boy. I put him in your alms-basket when he was a month old. His —father had disgraced our name and I wanted my son to grow into manhood under your good influence.

About his neck I tied a locket. In it was written his name—*Stanley*. I asked that he be allowed to wear the locket always and keep the name."

Then after a slight pause in which the little half-wit's face came before her mind's eye, causing her to feel that the world was crashing about her ears, Marjory said:

"I've come for him. I cannot stand to be without him longer!"

During Marjory's monologue the matron had sat watching her keenly, but now she asked:

"How long is it since you saw your boy? How old is he?"

Marjory was surprised at this question, but hastened to answer:

"Why, I haven't seen him but once since I put him here. That was over twelve years ago."

"You wouldn't know him then if you saw him?"

Marjory winced. "I suppose not."

The matron sat silently watching Marjory for several moments. Then she spoke.

"I know of no such boy here."

Marjory was nonplussed. "But surely you *must*!" she exclaimed. "The locket was a highly polished gold one with raised silver initials on one side, and the signs of the zodiac in raised silver on the other."

The woman shook her head. Then in explanation she said: "I have been here only a little over a month. Matron Morrison died, you know, and I was sent on to take her place. I know little of the children. Perhaps Catherine here may know about this particular case. She has been in the Home longer than the rest. I will send for her," and ringing a bell that faintly tinkled out in the dim distance, she said to a young girl who answered it:

"Ask Catherine to come here."

Another untidy woman with an uninspired face entered the room.

"Catherine," the matron said, "do you know anything about this boy? Madam," turning to Marjory, "kindly tell her what you have told me."

Marjory repeated the brief history of Stanley's entrance into the Home of His Lost Sheep.

Catherine shook her head. "I don't remember anybody by the name of Stanley during *my* time," she said.

Marjory went pale. Again the face of the little half-wit came to haunt her. "Perhaps he was known by a nickname," she suggested. She hoped fervently that this suggestion would lead nowhere; yet she made it because of the courage which her determination to do her duty had aroused in her.

Catherine's face brightened for a moment. "I think I do remember seeing one of the children with some such locket," she said thoughtfully, "though I certainly do not remember any 'Stanley' among them. It seems to me there was some trouble between two of the boys not long ago—oh, I know, I think I heard something or other about some incorrigible we sent to the Reform School for having stolen a locket from one of the other boys. I have a faint recollection of some such thing occurring a few weeks since."

"Was the—original owner—of the locket a hunchback?" Marjory forced herself to ask.

"Why yes, that's right. Now I remember. The little 'Lion,' as the children call him, claims that Ninety-nine took it away from him just before Ninety-nine went to the Reform School. Ninety-nine was a dangerous incorrigible, madam. These children aren't the innocent lambs they look to be!" she hastened to add, lest there be some criticism of her by this handsomely gowned lady.

But Marjory had not heard the last part of her remark. In her mind and heart there was a battle raging which shut out everything else.

So her worst, her wildest fears were true! That repulsively deformed body and that pathetically inadequate mind were sprung from her very own! The little hunchback was the clinging baby she had deserted. Yet even now, convinced as she was, she would not, could not, accept this fact without further struggle.

"But his name?" she asked faintly. "If he *is* my boy," and she shuddered at the very memory of his hands upon her bag, "he must be down on your records under the name of Stanley. I particularly requested that he be known by that name. Surely you would not have denied a mother, even an unknown and deserting mother, this small request."

The nurse, Catherine, stared at the matron, and the matron stared back at Catherine.

"Our records were destroyed last week when the office end of this building burned down," the matron said. "You see now I have to use the chapel as my office," she complained. "It's very inconvenient. In fact this whole place is inconvenient and unmodern to the last degree."

Again Marjory had heard only the woman's first remarks. Learning that there was no way to prove whether the half-witted child was really her child or not, Marjory's mental suffering had become so acute that it seemed to surround her and bar her out from everything else in the world. She felt convinced of the relationship between her and the half-wit. Whether this conviction sprang from the secret and dread feeling of sorrow and despair which had for so long been connected with everything pertaining to Denneth, or whether the mother in her recognized that something in him which meant the tie of blood, she

could not say. But whatever the cause, she now believed, in spite of the possibility that more than one child in the Home might have worn a locket, that the little hunchback was her son.

What was her duty? Should she take him, this repulsive creature, from the Home and, openly announcing her secret to the world, stand between him and it? Or should she leave him here? No one would be any the wiser if she did leave him. Not a soul except herself and her mother, and her faithful maid, knew that she had a son. Her mother, dear soul, would but welcome this kindly escape from any explanations as to Marjory's past. The child himself, too, would not be able to appreciate the difference in his surroundings if she did take him out.

She rose to go.

"But his welfare?" Marjory's conscience argued. His happiness?—for he evidently was capable of emotions. No, he was probably totally unconscious of anything save the need of food and the roof over his head. In this Home where he knew the other children he was doubtless perfectly content. She longed to escape through the gates; yet lingered on as the matron talked of her own trials and tribulations. The woman belonged to that large class among us, inside and outside of churches, who believe that it is Society's duty to provide not only a living, but luxuries, for those who choose a profession of service which appeals to them personally, regardless of whether they in that profession be of benefit to Society or not.

Unheeding the woman's complaints, Marjory's mind went on fighting out the battle with her conscience.

"Isn't there any way you can establish the boy's identity," she asked. "I came hoping, and wanting, to find my son; but naturally I do not want to take a child I do not know *is* my son."

Once more Catherine looked at the matron and she looked back at Catherine. Food was scarce and expenses were high. The Home was even now continually being overcrowded by the frequent ringing of the alcove's bell. Should they do more than go through the mere formalities required by the authorities when a person came asking to adopt a child? Would there not be just so much extra did they but get rid of the little hunchback?

"The records are gone, madam," the matron said. "I can't think of any other way for you to identify him. You might question the children themselves. Perhaps some of them may remember seeing the locket. I do not."

"How long have you been here, Catherine?" Marjory asked turning toward the other woman.

"Nearly ten years," she answered.

"Have you been here longer than anyone else?"

"Yes," the nurse said.

"And you don't remember definitely when or where you saw the locket? Or whether it was stolen from the little deformed lad? In other words, you don't know whether the little hunchback is its original owner or not?"

Again Catherine answered no. "All I remember about it is what I have told you."

Marjory looked at both women sharply. "It seems to me little short of remarkable that no one here knows about a child who wore so conspicuous a thing as that locket." Then looking about the shabby chapel and out into the dirty halls, she said:

"I would like to have all the attendants here questioned, please," and turning her back on the other two, Marjory walked up and down the chapel, for the thousandth time miserably going over her life as it was and as it might have been. If this mentally deficient

hunchback proved to be her child, as she now seriously feared and believed him to be, what was she going to do with him? The very thought of having him near her turned her sick with distress. Yet the more fully she saw into the actual conditions of the Home of His Lost Sheep, the more keenly she realized it would be unfair to leave him there, even though he was so deficient as not to feel the poverty, disgrace, and misery of his present situation.

To Marjory it seemed a lifetime before several other women entered the room. These on being questioned by her shook their heads. They knew nothing of a boy with a locket, nor did they remember ever having heard the name of Stanley in connection with any of their charges.

"Perhaps Patrick, the watchman, knows," one of them suggested. "He has been here longer than any of us, Madam, and sees the children in a way we seldom do."

A wave of indignation passed through Marjory at this statement. These women seemed to pride themselves on the fact that they knew little about the children in their care. They seemed to think it actually reflected credit upon them to have held themselves aloof from the little waifs!

She opened her lips to express her righteous indignation at their display of indifference, but changing her mind, she said:

"Kindly send for Patrick."

In answer to a summons the watchman whom she had seen in the yard entered the chapel.

With a show of deep respect he went through the formalities expected of a good servant upon entering the presence of his superiors, and then, cap in hand, he stood awkwardly before Marjory.

"I've already questioned this man," Marjory said,

turning toward the matron. "He knew none of the children's names. He told me so. He knows their *numbers!*"

The matron gave Patrick a disapproving look, at the same moment saying graciously to Marjory:

"Oh, I guess you misunderstood him. We try very hard to have an air of intimacy like a child's own family circle in our Home. The numbers are merely a matter of record. The dear children are given names also."

"Patrick," Marjory broke in impatiently, "do you remember ever having seen one of the boys here wear a gold locket with a queer design in silver upon it?"

Patrick's eyes shifted anxiously from the matron's face to that of Marjory—then back again. He seemed unable to gain a cue. Yet he knew that he must say what the all-powerful matron wished him to say—such diplomacy had enabled him to keep an easy job for years. He hesitated.

"Answer the lady's question," she commanded; and as she looked him squarely in the eyes, he could not for the life of him tell whether she wished him to tell the truth or not. All the eyes in the room were fastened upon him.

"Er—it's after not er—knowing it, I be," he stumbled. Then thinking he saw a disapproving gleam in one of the nurse's eyes, he blundered on desperately: "That is, er—er—it's not entirely sure I be. I think"—the gleam became more pronounced—"I think I do be after remembering some such trinket."

"Yes," Marjory encouraged, watching him eagerly, her cheeks alternately flushing and paling in her anxiety. "When do you think you saw it—and where?"

Again the matron's eyes seemed to give warning. Patrick swallowed hard.

"It's not after knowing I be!" he finished desper-

ately, taking a deep breath and feeling conscious of a duty well performed.

"You do not *remember!*" Marjory asked, astonished at the turn the man's answer had taken. Then her anxiety getting the better of her, she exclaimed:

"Think, man, think! For heaven's sake try to remember. It's terribly, desperately, important to me!" Then she flushed at having displayed her emotion before these strangers.

Patrick looked at the matron and she gazed back at Patrick. In her eyes he again seemed to read something. His eyes tried to ask hers the question as to what he should say— But her eyes did not change their expression in the slightest degree.

"Did you see the locket on the little hunchback?" Marjory asked bravely. Her hands were nervously clinching and unclinching among the soft folds of her skirt as she spoke.

Once more the man dumbly appealed to the various pairs of eyes as to what his answer should be. The matron's face was absolutely unreadable in its sphinx-like calm. Being undecided herself as to the wiser course to pursue, she now thought to let fate take its course.

"Well, why don't you answer my questions?" Marjory said to the harassed watchman, again her old imperious self.

The man nervously twirled his thumbs. He drew one foot up the back of his other leg. He scratched his head.

"It's thinking he *is* the one I seen it on, I am," Patrick answered doubtfully. "But it's not sure I am, at-all, at-all!"

Marjory collapsed into a chair. "You don't feel sure? You don't *know?*"

"It's sure I am that there's no such locket on any

of the dear laddies here now; but as fer the ijit having had one, well I do be thinking that——”

Pausing he again looked at the matron, then at Catherine. Receiving no guiding look from either, he mumbled on:

“Maybe he did have one, and maybe he didn’t.”

For a moment more Marjory sat very still, too weak from the emotion through which she had been passing to move. Now standing up she again faced the group. Her head was thrown back, and though her eyes were dilated and her cheeks extremely flushed, except for this there was no indication of her recent nervousness or indecision.

“And there’s no one else here who would be likely to know?” she asked.

The matron answered in the negative.

“You have no record of such a child—dying? If he were living you would surely know of his name and his locket, would you not?”

This time it was the matron’s turn to feel as harassed as the Irish watchman had felt. “I am a stranger,” she said, “I am sorry, Madam, but we have given you all the information which we possess.”

“Then I—cannot—have my boy!” Marjory said. And hastily saying adieu she made her way from the chapel, and went on out from the Home of His Lost Sheep.

Once more the selfish, cowardly side of her nature fully possessed her. She would not do anything foolish or detrimental to her own future. Once again she had been mistaken in thinking she could find happiness. That blessing seemed destined always to be lacking in her life. Did she but seem to see it growing in the distance, it disappeared like a mirage. Her little son was evidently dead.

Walking rapidly through the city streets, gay with

their pleasure seekers of a Saturday afternoon, she forced all thought of the little "Lion" from her mind. She could not accept a child that might not be hers!

* * * * *

Deep in the night Marjory awoke, seeming to feel the clutch of her baby's little clinging fingers around her own—the warmth of his soft lips against her cheek! She wanted her boy! *How* she wanted him!

Vaguely at first, then more plainly, the face of the little hunchback came up before her mind's eye. Blackness reigned within her hotel room, yet the little hunch-backed figure seemed to stand out boldly to her sight. With the same horror and repugnance she had felt the day before, she saw before her the loose lips, the lolling tongue, the vacant eyes, until she could have screamed in her agony.

The boy seemed to come closer—to climb upon the bed—to fasten his arms about her neck. She could not move! He clung. She could not breathe! He kissed her! Claimed her for his mother. He was sapping her strength, her very life!

She screamed; the child ran off. Across the room, then, he stopped, and stood looking at her, sadly. As she looked back at him his physical deformity and mental abortion suddenly fell away, and she saw only the purity of his innocent spirit—the soul of the little baby she had known and loved! In this light of true knowledge he was beautiful. Shining from his lonely eyes there came to her a pleading. He needed her. *How* he needed her!

"Wake up, Miss Marjy, wake up!" Mary Anna's voice sounded in Marjory's ears.

Continuing to tremble violently, Marjory opened her eyes to see the anxious face of her faithful maid bending above her, a candle held high in the air.

"Law, chile, I thunk it were Jedgement when I heard yo' screams," she said in a relieved voice as she saw her mistress was all right. "Dat nightmare you was ridin' was fairly standin' on its tail," she chuckled.

Marjory lay looking up into the good-natured face for several moments, and then, the memory of her dream returning, she turned upon her pillow to bury her face in its depths.

"Why, honey, why, darlin', what's de matter?" Mary Anna asked, as great sobs shook her mistress from head to foot. "Tell yo' ole Mary Anna what's de matter, chile!"

Slowly Marjory turned back toward the sympathetic dark face. "He—he probably *is* my boy!" she said, "and—and—it doesn't matter what he is like, it is my duty to take him away from that place!" Then before Mary Anna could ask the meaning of these words, Marjory went on:

"What time is it, Mary Anna?"

"Why, lemme see," Mary Anna said dazedly, going over and peering at the clock. "Why, it's daytime, after six o'clock." Then walking to the window she let the shade fly up and looked out, in her endeavor to see the sky, over a sea of roofs and chimney tops toward tall buildings massed darkly. "I declar," she said impatiently, "dis New Yawk is so full of buildin's nobody can't see nothin'! Dat clock's right though, honey, so it must be mornin'."

But before she could finish her sentence Marjory was out of bed and hurrying into her clothes.

"Get dressed, Mary Anna," she said. "Last night I told you my boy had died in that orphan asylum. I lied—and for the second time! He is living, Mary Anna, I feel sure he is living, and I'm going to do my duty!"

At these words the latter part of Marjory's dream

returned to her consciousness in seeming encouragement, and she thought that she could now perceive an intellect and real possibilities behind that loose-lipped, idiotic face. She felt exalted spiritually, and a promise of a happier future came up to stimulate her imagination. Every good instinct in her crowded forward, and in spite of her involuntary physical repulsion for the little half-wit, the pure light of Marjory's real mother-love burned strong and true, transforming duty into a sacred right.

CHAPTER XVIII

OLD Judge Sawyer laid down his paper. Leaning eagerly forward his eyes pierced those of the small group before him. "I tell you people you don't *know* what it would mean to this country of ours, to the world in fact, to have constructive instead of destructive methods for the curing of crime! The man who wrote that article," pointing to a paragraph in his paper, "has the right idea. By Jove, I wish——"

But in the middle of his sentence he broke off sharply, for a girlishly dressed elderly matron in the group, getting up, excused herself and rustled haughtily off down the hotel veranda.

Judge Sawyer smiled. "Another lady bored!" he said whimsically, looking toward Marjory, who smiled back and said:

"Oh, you mustn't mind Mother. She still thinks it isn't ladylike to listen to such conversations!"

The judge resumed his monologue at the point where he had broken off. "Do you know what is one of our gravest faults, the thing that keeps civilization back more than almost anything else?" he went on, running his hand through his gray hair.

"Now, Judge, cut out the 'preach,'" said a younger man dressed in immaculate white flannels. Then after indulging in an obtrusive yawn he jumped up with alacrity. "Come on and play me a round. Great morning for golf."

Judge Sawyer frowned, but concluding that any show of annoyance toward this group of summer idlers would do no good, he only shook his head at the man's request.

Laughing, the younger man turned to Marjory.

"How about you? Doesn't that tempt you?" waving his hand off toward the links that lay like an emerald far beneath them near the shore of the turquoise bay.

Marjory shook her head.

"Now this isn't a morning on which to ride hobbies!" the man said, laying his hand affectionately on the judge's shoulders. "Who *will* play with me?"

"I will, Billy," a lady in the group volunteered, standing up. "Come on," and they strolled off.

Judge Sawyer watched them disappear; then sighed.

"Yes, serious-minded folk are cranks and bores, nowadays. I very much fear that joy-rides have taken the place of hobbies! It seems to be the generally accepted idea in America that we have too much humor to be serious—except about making money, of course! One of our most blatant faults," he harked back to his original and favorite theme, "is our primitive belief in trite and wholly artificial sayings! Why, they have come to have the force of incontrovertible dogma, impregnating our whole social family. Who of you has not quoted 'once a thief, always a thief' when you hear of some poor devil, an ex-convict, who has been turned down when looking for an honest job until in sheer desperation he goes wrong again—or goes wrong because he has never been shown how to go right? Who of you doesn't believe that 'blood is thicker than water' when a chap with a chance, plus a family backing him, *does* succeed? 'Where there's smoke, there must be fire' is another phrase which has put many a man, found in a suspicious position, in jail on circumstantial evidence. 'Like father, like son' drags down the would-be success of a son sprung from a father who has proven a failure—and oh, a hundred like phrases! Words, words, idle phrases, they surround us from almost the minute of our birth, and do more to destroy us than anything else!"

"But I'm a bore again," Judge Sawyer said, contritely smiling at the women about him busy with their knitting, while the men sat around flicking the ashes from their cigarettes, idly taking their summer vacations, their much talked-of and needed rest.

The falsity of the idea that idleness and aimlessness assures the attainment of rest flashed over the judge's keen mind. How absurd it was! All a part, however, of the present-day extravagance, and the failure to appreciate life's true values.

"But Judge," a young fellow who had been listening said, "you can't *change* a man, sir. You can't—"

"That's it. There you go!" the judge broke in indignantly. "Same old phrase. If I had let you finish your sentence you would have said: 'You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.' Or more likely still you would have said something wisely foolish about 'the criminal class, you know'!. Now wouldn't you?"

The young man grinned, but before he could make answer the judge hurried on, a deep earnestness filling his eyes as he spoke: "There is no radical change necessary to make a bad man into a good man. The 'remaking of men'—another one of your trite sayings—simply means that a man's energies are applied to constructive instead of destructive work. They are the same energies; and evolution, not revolution, is what happens when he has educated and developed his *better* self. I believe no man, unless he inherits some abnormality, is fundamentally bad. In all my judicial experience in the criminal courts I have yet to find a man who is entirely devoid of any good quality. Almost all of them possess the splendid quality of loyalty; and loyalty is a pretty good base to build upon!"

"But how about Lombroso's theory, sir?" said someone else in the group.

Judge Sawyer sniffed with disgust. "So that idea, too, is still prevalent! Destructive ideas, like gossip, seem to leave their stench even with 'fair-minded Americans' too busy to read! Why, my dear boy, don't you know that that cock, Lombroso, has been proven absolutely wrong? Without question the world accepted his superficial statement that the 'criminal class' possessed certain physical marks which set them apart from other men. To prove this theory Lombroso measured the ears, nose, eyes, and mouth, of only men *in prison!* Brilliant thing to do, wasn't it? Charles Goring came along and, making measurements and examinations on men outside as well as inside of prison, Lombroso's theory went up like that!" puffing the smoke from his cigar skyward. "There is no difference! Criminals are natural men—not always normal men, understand. Some of them are born with an abnormality, some are weak and some are sick, but they are all men, with man's sorrows and joys, and each and every one of them possesses in some degree the spirit of Christ which will finally redeem the world."

The group was silent. The judge's eyes, Lincoln-esque in their understanding sympathy, seemed to see a vision which the rest of them could not see.

Finally the young fellow who had first spoken again broke the silence with a flippancy which sprang from his lack of years.

"Judge, I really do think you should commit a crime and be put in awhile," he laughed. "Upon my word, I believe you'd make *friends* with the crooks!—But as Billy said, the day is too fine to be riding hobbies!" and getting down from his perch this future president of the United States—according to his fond mother—adjusted his tie and continued urbanely:

"Who wants to play a set of tennis? How about

you, faire ladye?" turning with much manner toward Marjory. "Sorry you can't play, sir," sympathetically to the elderly judge.

Marjory shook her head. "I'm getting too old for such 'strenuous' as Mary Anna says," she smiled. "Better ask one of the girls."

"Too old!" the young fellow exclaimed with a look of frank admiration at Marjory's fair face and figure. "By Jove, you don't look one day older than your son."

Then he bit his lip. What a fool he was to have made such a faux pas! Though the little hunchback was as small as a child of ten or twelve, every one at the resort knew he was of age. He hoped she understood that in referring to her son he had not had in mind the little fellow's mental lack or deformity.

"Well, then, I'll have to find someone else to play with me. Bye-bye," and the callow youth was off down the veranda toward a bevy of giggling girls looking as gay as a rainbow in their myriad-colored sweaters.

The group about the elderly judge began to scatter, That much-talked-of hybrid, known as summer society, which is composed in large part of the tired business man and the tireless social woman, is seldom content to stay long in one place. The fall was approaching, and with the first tang of coming frost these vacation idlers were at once on the move for another place. Some now went to pack up, others to see about reservations, and soon one and all had departed, leaving Judge Sawyer and Marjory alone upon the veranda.

"How is the new book going?" the judge asked kindly. "And what is it about?"

Marjory lifted lovely eyes from the knitting in her lap in very much the same way she used to do

as a younger woman, though she was now totally unconscious of their childlike appeal. "It's *not* going," she said. "Somehow I don't seem able to write any more, Judge."

"Nonsense," he said. "That's just your imagination. Why, don't you remember when you were writing your fairy book you often felt the same discouragement?" Then looking affectionately down at Marjory, he continued:

"I'll never forget your telling me about that secret book! Its writing was a very dark secret indeed then, wasn't it? My! that doesn't seem nine years ago, does it?"

Marjory smiled: "Nine years is a long time, Judge," she said. "But it has been very wonderful to me to meet and know you again this summer. It is strange that we both should have come back to this place, isn't it? But about my writing—the fairy book's publication made me very happy; but somehow I haven't seemed to feel the *need* of writing since that time. Yet I long to write, too! There seems to be something in me that I want to express in that way, and yet, since I took Stanley from the Ho—the Sanatorium in which I had him because of his affliction, I—well I guess I haven't had as much time on my hands. Perhaps that is the reason I have not written another book."

"Well, you will write it sooner or later," Judge Sawyer said. "You are of the creative type, I think, and your boy won't need you so constantly now, as you tell me he is so very much better."

"Yes, he is better," Marjory agreed, but her eyes even as she spoke were very sad. "That psychologist has helped him wonderfully; more so even than the surgeons, though of course they helped him too. But he can never be really normal, Judge. He is over

twenty-one, you know, and has and always will have the mind of a child."

"Yes, I know," the judge said sympathetically. "Poor little woman, it has been very hard for you."

"Oh no, it's not that," Marjory hastened to say. "It's—it's the fact that——"

Then breaking off she said impulsively: "Oh judge Sawyer, I—I wish I could tell you something I've never told anyone! Somehow you—remind me so much of somebody who was lovelier and sweeter to me than anyone else in all the world, that I feel I've known you forever!"

The judge inclined his head in acknowledgment of these words, then looking at Marjory said:

"And you have always since I met you reminded me of someone else too—the girl I wanted to make my wife. That was long before you were born."

Marjory's eyes took on an added gleam of interest. But the judge hastened to say, rising from his chair as he did so:

"Suppose we walk down toward the bay. This deliciously crisp air makes one want to stretch lazy muscles in a long walk. It won't be many days now before *my* stretching of lazy muscles will be at an end, temporarily."

Marjory looked puzzled; but silently waiting for an explanation she accompanied the judge through the artificially gardened grounds surrounding the hotel, until they gained the relief of flower-studded fields. Crossing these they struck into a piece of untouched woodland, through which lay the more direct access to the shore. Neither had spoken since they left the hotel; until, the judge's last words recurring to Marjory, she asked him:

"What did you mean just now, Judge Sawyer, about not being able to stretch lazy muscles?"

They had now reached the edge of the water on a point jutting far out to sea. Judge Sawyer's eyes lighted, and without answering Marjory's question he said:

"To me this is the most beautiful coast in the world—but then I'm prejudiced, I suppose. I've always lived upon it." Pointing toward the north across the foam-flecked blue expanse, he continued. "About sixty miles up from here is my old home town of Dunham. I left it a good many years ago. Down there," pointing south, "is the next most beautiful place I know; but it is too near Hampton, so I come up here for a rest. Have you ever been down there, down to Thornley-by-the-Sea?"

Marjory started visibly; then answering in the affirmative, she recalled mental pictures of the place as Judge Sawyer went on talking. The night of her first meeting with Denneth flashed back to her. Again she saw the moon-kissed sea come rolling in in great undulating waves. She recalled the story Denneth had told her of his mother's death. She remembered also the telling of his whimsical imaginings, and that she had in turn told him one of the little fairy tales which had since been published in her book.

His handsome face rose up before her. Her heart quickened. Once more she lived those orange-red and russet-brown weeks in camp, where the homey smell of roasting chestnuts intermingled in her memory with the glimpses of shy deer, the flash of stray red fox, the call of bob-whites from the harvested fields. How she had loved him!

"When I see all this beauty, this evidence of one supreme and munificent Creator, I cannot but feel how wrong, how inexcusably wrong and spiritually destructive a penal system is which shuts all this out from the sight and life of any man," Judge Sawyer

was saying. "Why, I knew a boy, a mere lad he was, who loved this rock-bound coast better than everything in the world—that is, besides his mother. He was devoted to her," and the judge's eyes softened. "That boy knew every stick and stone, every flower and blade of grass around Dunham. He loved every bird, and all wild creatures, and they loved him. As I look back at him across the years, he seems the very embodiment of freedom. He was essentially *nature's freeman*. Yet it was I who had to sentence that boy to State's Prison for ten years!"

"It makes me feel physically sick yet to think of what a nature like his must have suffered when shut away. He does not know it, of course; he escaped from prison, and I lost track of him then; but he has probably had more to do with shaping my career than any other one influence in my life."

Judge Sawyer's last few sentences had destroyed her mental pictures of her first days of happiness with Denneth, and now to Marjory's mind came the memory of her ensuing years of sadness. For the first time the realization of Denneth's, and not her suffering, swept over her. Denneth, like this other boy of whom the judge had been speaking, had been one of "*nature's freemen*." Her heart throbbed with sympathy, and failing to fight against this emotion as she had always done heretofore, she now began to see her desertion of Denneth in its true light. But the judge was still talking. She must listen! Struggling to put her own thoughts from her, she heard him say:

"You asked me just now what I meant by saying it would soon be impossible for me to stretch my lazy muscles. I rather hesitate to tell you, and yet I want you to know my secret, just as you told me yours nine years ago."

Marjory turned eyes of real admiration and friend-

ship up to his. "In two weeks from to-day," the judge went on, "I go to State's Prison!"

Marjory gave a start at these words. What could the judge mean? His expression made her understand that he was not in jest. Yet what else could such a statement mean?

"Of course there is some explanation," she said. Then smiling whimsically: "Don't keep me in 'suspenders' as Mary Anna says. 'I'm a mere woman you know, with a woman's curiosity!'"

The judge returned her smile affectionately. Then his face becoming serious again, he said:

"The explanation is this: As I said just now to that group I was boring to extinction, my judicial experience has led me to believe that all men can be made into law-abiding citizens if the right means are employed toward them. I have known hundreds of 'criminals' before and after confinement in our penal institutions. With a few exceptions, I have yet to find one who has been benefited by those institutions as they are now run. Common sense tells me therefore that there must be some fault with the system itself. A fault seldom lies entirely with one side. If our present system makes criminals instead of *unmakes* them, then we should do away with the present system. But you see," his eyes looking afar off as though seeing a vision, as they were wont to do at such times, "I have been able to make my observations only from the outside. In order to be capable of really understanding the thing, I must get the viewpoint of the man inside looking out, as well as that of the man outside looking in! I have made my arrangements to enter the Warsaw prison near Hampton. It was rather a difficult thing to arrange, I must admit," and his mouth moulded itself into the lines of a fighter. "Those who have once been Egyptian slave drivers

with a band of Israelites in their power, so to speak, resent interference! And investigation is the last thing in the world the prison officials want. But I have booked up for a two weeks' stay in Warsaw. When I am released, I shall doubtless know more about my zebra brotherhood. Oh those shameful, degrading, cruel stripes!" he burst out.

"But Judge," Marjory exclaimed anxiously, "you'll be thrown with criminals! Aren't you afraid, and won't the life be too hard for you?" looking at the man's delicately featured yet virile face.

Judge Sawyer brushed back his white hair with a typical gesture. He was beginning to show signs of his advanced years in spite of the fire of eternal youth which burned in his eyes.

"It must be dreadful in those places!" Marjory continued, shuddering, and trying to force down the accusing voice of conscience that the judge's words had provoked in her.

"Yes, it is dreadful. Far more dreadful, I imagine, than any of us know!" he said sadly. "That is exactly why I am going to live in such a place for a while. I have reached a point in my life where my conscience demands that I know exactly to what sort of a place I have been sentencing men. Until I do know, I have determined never to sentence another man to prison. The burden of this uncertainty has lain upon my heart a long time—I am now no longer willing to be the means through which the law throws men who have erred upon the refuse heap—for such is prison—until I have seen for myself that there is no better way to treat them."

Marjory was deadly pale and trembled as she spoke. "But judge," she said, "you'll be thrown in direct contact with terrible creatures. Why, you'll be living, eating, sleeping with them! You may be at their

mercy! I'm afraid for you to do it, even if you're not!"

Judge Sawyer shook his head smilingly. "You know my pet theory," he said. "I believe all criminals are possible men, all men possible criminals. Heredity plus environment produces all sorts of characters among us. Nevertheless we are all good and bad alike. From both heredity and environment we are all capable of developing the good and discarding the bad. There is no one who is unredeemable save those poor souls perhaps who are mentally lacking. And even they should have every care and be given every chance to develop their better and not their worse side. You see," and his lips smiled, although his eyes had again taken on the look which distinguished him. "I could never be afraid of anyone in the face of my unalterable belief that there is more good than bad in everyone."

Marjory stared at him, a look of distress now clouding her eyes. Thinking it was anxiety for his welfare, the judge went on:

"You mustn't worry, little woman. I am probably safer in prison than anywhere else, as far as personal harm from criminals is concerned. You have probably never known a criminal—that is one branded a criminal by the law——"

But he got no further. At these words, which seemed almost an accusation, the flood of Marjory's long pent-up emotions burst its bounds; and seating herself upon a rock she buried her face in her hands.

Judge Sawyer, alarmed, bent solicitously forward.

"Why, my dear child, what in the world is the matter?"

Without answering, and endeavoring to shut out the sounds and sights about her, Marjory tried to think out the problem which suddenly presented it-

self. Should she tell this judge, her one true friend, the secret she had kept so long, the secret which seemed sometimes to be sapping her very life as well as her happiness? She never looked into the foolish face of the little hunchback without having to drive the handsome face of Denneth from her mind. The years of silent suppressed suffering had begun to tell upon her. Even the outlet of devoted attention to the invalid boy had failed to satisfy her. The wonderful illumination of the judge's optimistic faith, coupled with the words which displayed his spirit of true Christianity, had aroused Marjory's old longing to be of more use in the world. The recollection of her disbelief in and selfish cynicism respecting Denneth during the dark hours when he had needed her most rose up to accuse her. She lived over every detail of those weeks. The past years in which she had made no effort to comfort him smote her.

In self-abasement she reflected that she did not even know where he was—that, true to her word, she had put him out of her life!—had never even attempted to find him. Yet legally he was her husband, if still alive—the father of the child she had resented as not being normal. She now asked herself how it were possible that she had ever imagined Stanley could have been born other than he was, when she herself had been so lacking in goodness or spirituality of thought? The poor little fellow had been given her as he was, in direct punishment for her conduct and bearing toward the man she had loved!

Because of her present ability to see things beyond the horizon of popular prejudice, she now saw how despicable her desertion of Denneth had been. For the first time she understood, through the clarity of vision she caught from the judge, that, though in itself debasing, Denneth's theft had not necessarily made of

him a thing debased. At this thought, so entirely new to her mind, a mind which had fought against any sense of justice toward the man who had ruined her life, Marjory began to view Denneth in the same big way in which Judge Sawyer would have viewed him. His chivalry and pure devotion returned to her newly awakened consciousness of what his love had really meant in her life, and in an illuminating flash she felt that his good qualities minimized his faults. She could remain silent no longer. She must confide in some one. Jumping up she said to the astonished judge:

"Judge Sawyer, I am a wicked, wicked woman! I *have* known a criminal! I—I—am married to a criminal!" and then in a torrent of self-abuse she told the man before her the story of her marriage and its disastrous end.

For a long while after she ceased speaking, Judge Sawyer stood silently gazing off across the blue bay.

It was hard for him to connect this exquisitely dainty little woman by his side with the story she had just told him. In view of his knowledge of her and her charming sweetness of nature, her appalling selfishness as disclosed by her own words seemed almost unbelievable to him. Yet from the moment of their meeting Judge Sawyer had understood Mrs. Matthews's character, and had guessed at the influence such a person was likely to exert over a woman placed beneath her care as Marjory had been placed by right of birth? So Judge Sawyer tried to excuse Marjory's conduct by mentally shifting the blame from her to her mother. He felt certain that that stylish matron had played no small part in Marjory's failure to live up to her marriage vow. He heard enough of their conversations together to know that, in spite of Marjory's superior strength of mind, her

mother had instilled into her daughter a dread of adverse criticism to such an extent that she used it to bolster up her fast waning power of influence.

Gradually Judge Sawyer saw and understood the entire course of Marjory's married life as surely and as well as if he had been present through it all. It was just one more case of a mother continuing to rule her daughter after the daughter had reached the age where she should have been allowed to rule herself. He was convinced that Marjory, poor child, like many others, had let her parent's meddlesome criticism, false ideals, and foolish phrases stand between her and happiness.

Slowly bringing his thoughtful eyes from the deep color of the bay, upon which he had watched unseeing the gleam of white boats as their sails caught the light, he looked sympathetically into Marjory's upturned face.

"Where is he now? Of course you let him know of your boy's birth?"

Marjory winced; but continued to look bravely up. "After I gained the safety of the hospital I made no attempt to find out anything about Denneth," she answered. "In fact I made the opposite effort. I would not allow a newspaper in my room. Entering under an assumed name I received no mail. I did not want to know what had become of him! As I told you just now, at that time my one object and aim in life was to protect my name and my baby's name from Denneth's shame.

"Oh I know it was dreadfully wicked and selfish of me," she hastened to say, as the judge was about to speak, "but I did not see that then, Judge Sawyer."

"I understand," he said kindly. "But you must surely have in some way heard whether or no your

husband was apprehended. Something of his trial must have reached you——”

“No, I know absolutely nothing about him,” Marjory broke in. Then in a voice hoarse with suffering: “I wish to God I did!”

Judge Sawyer’s eyes took in the fair quivering face in one quick glance. Then becoming lost in thought he once more stood gazing out to sea.

As Marjory watched him she felt sure that in the judge’s big and generous mind her conduct toward Denneth must seem inexcusable indeed. Yet she realized also, as she watched his sympathetic far-seeing dark eyes, that if anyone could really understand and forgive her her life of selfishness in connection with Denneth, this man could.

She wished she had known him during those trying hours immediately after his theft. Perhaps had she known this man at that time she would not have made the mistake of taking the road of self-preservation instead of the road of helpfulness and loyalty toward her husband. As this thought passed through her distressed reason her conscience told her that no influence, it mattered not how good, could or would have saved her from her utter selfishness, cloaked as it had then been with the excuse of her boy’s future. Had she not known Stanley Asquith just a little while before? Had not his influence been as big and splendid as that of the judge? Had she wanted to, could she not have gained a lesson from his conduct toward her? Yet no; she had deliberately thought of herself and her own happiness first! She had wanted to forget Denneth—to put him and everything pertaining to him out of her life! She had not made the slightest effort to save him after learning of his theft. Accepting his money, just as she had always accepted it, with

no feeling except that of her *right* to do so, notwithstanding her refusal to use it, she had fled to Virginia and left him to his fate. She had not even given him the benefit of a doubt, nor tried to inquire why he had taken the money; but like other self-righteous and untempted folk who form the *un-criminal* class of society, she had immediately dubbed him a thief, and as such considered him to be beyond any consideration, excuses or future thought!

The days in the little woodsy brown and green flat with its flower box windows and birch-bark ornaments returned to her. But like a shadow of forewarning, her mother's and her own dissatisfied phrases also came to her memory. With a sense of wonder she compared the yearly sum of money which Denneth was then earning and on which they were forced to live with that of her present monthly milliners' and dressmakers' bills. The difference was not very great! Yet on that tiny salary Denneth had managed to give her many little comforts and even luxuries. With a gentle patience he had met her and her mother's ever-growing demands and complaints, and managed, somehow, to give her more and more.

She recalled the shabby gentility and cut of Denneth's immaculate dress, and now compared it with the foolish up-to-dateness that she herself had demanded. She remembered all the thousand and one little ways he had tried to please her, and with self-hatred recalled with what fretful lack of appreciation such advances had been met. Perhaps it was this very thing, these fretful demands for more than he could afford to give her, which had tempted him to take the money! She had heard of just such cases.

She shuddered with this added weight of responsibility; and try as she would she could not throw off the new-born thought of her own possible guilt in

the matter of Denneth's crime. She locked her hands together in the intensity of the mental suffering this thought brought, and started to speak. But changing her mind, as the judge was still standing gazing off across the water, her memories held her. A feeling of acute shame came over her as she went back over the time, so many years before, when, learning that the brightest crown of womanhood was soon to be hers, she had met it with anything but a feeling of sacred happiness.

The judge turned. "Do you really mean what you said just now?"

Marjory looked puzzled for a moment. For so long she had allowed recollection of the past to fill her mind that she had forgotten what her last words to the Judge had been. Recalling them, however, she exclaimed:

"Yes. I would give anything to find him!"

"You realize the consequences, of course?" Judge Sawyer said.

Marjory nodded, white to the lips.

Believing that her decision had been made on impulse rather than from the sense of justice and bravery which had been slowly developing in her for years past, he continued:

"It means disgrace. It means you will be the subject of scandal and slander and gossip. Without anyone to hide behind, you will have to face 'what people will say.' Your mother will doubtless disclaim you. Your 'friends' will desert you. 'Society' will consider you almost as much of a menace as it now considers men like your husband. Trite sayings, spoken in the hollow voice of the prophets, will ascribe your son's affliction to his heredity. Every act of yours will be eagerly seized upon and twisted to fit some motive or other which never in all probability had crossed your

mind. Even your beauty, or your money—which is said to talk—will not effectively destroy the stigma which will be your lot as a criminal's wife! For you it may mean——”

“It may mean helping *him*, Judge Sawyer!” Marjory broke in. “And I want to do that above anything now.” Then as the judge's eyes fired with pleasure and admiration Marjory went on:

“It is not to my credit, goodness knows! It has taken me long enough to come to this conclusion. But I am honest and earnest in wanting to find—and help—my husband now! If he is alive he *is* my husband still, you know, in spite of modern ideas. I married him for better or for worse. Perhaps I can help him, even yet,” and she swallowed the lump in her throat. Then continuing she asked:

“Don't you think if I can help him, that may in part atone for my previous selfishness?” But now completely losing her self-control the tears coursed down her cheeks. “Oh, if only I had been more like *you*, I never would have made this mistake!” she exclaimed bitterly. “I was thinking just now what it might have meant to me to have had an influence like yours in my early life. I've been miserably unhappy with my mother, and my father died before I could remember him. Yet I suppose had I known you I would not really have been kept from being the self-indulged creature I am to-day!” Then thinking aloud, she continued:

“Stanley Asquith was like you, and yet——”

The judge whirled upon her, hardly believing his ears. “Stanley Asquith,” he exclaimed: “did *you* know Stanley Asquith?”

“Why yes,” Marjory answered in surprise. “Did *you*? ”

“I knew him very well indeed,” Judge Sawyer an-

swered. "He was one of the finest young men who ever lived!"

The hypocritical face of old Deacon Dennison came before his mind's eye as he said these words, and he wondered to himself how what he had said of Stanley Asquith could be true. Yet Stanley had been all he had pronounced him.

With the memory of the deacon's face there had also come to the judge the exquisite face of the girl he had loved. Marjory noticed that a note of bitterness rang in his voice as he went on to say:

"Stanley Asquith's father married the girl I wanted to make my wife—the girl you have always reminded me of."

"You knew Stanley's mother?" Marjory asked eagerly. "Oh, tell me about her. I—we—Stanley was the best friend I ever had in my life! He—he was a friend of my husband's, too. Do tell me all about him. What was his mother like? In all the years I knew him he never spoke of either of his parents."

Judge Sawyer frowned. For a moment there flashed in his eyes a look of ugly hatred that sat strangely upon the splendid old face. But this expression quickly passed, and a renewed light of strength and spirituality suffused his features. He spoke with his wonted gentleness.

"I did not know Stanley Asquith's mother," he said. "The girl I loved married his father—afterward." He hoped Marjory would not notice his evasion. Even to this day he resented acutely the marriage which had brought the girl he loved to dishonor and unhappiness.

Abruptly dropping this subject he continued: "If you really mean what you have said, I think I can help you to find your husband."

Marjory nodded, then listened attentively.

BOOKLOVERS
LOAN LIBRARY

"You can give me the date his theft was thought to have taken place, can't you?"

"Yes," Marjory said, the memory of those last days in Hampton rendering her voice weak in spite of her efforts to control it. "It is twenty-two years ago tomorrow since I knew of it and left Hampton."

Judge Sawyer made a rapid calculation and scribbled the date in his note-book.

"And whom was he supposed to have robbed?"

"The Commonwealth Security Bank in Hampton," Marjory answered.

The judge looked at her quickly. "Are you sure?" he asked.

"Why, yes," she answered. "I am sure. Stanley Asquith was the president, you know, and he gave Denneth his position there. It was just a few months after poor Stanley's death that—it happened," she concluded nervously.

"The Commonwealth Security Bank failed and went out of existence twenty-one years ago," Judge Sawyer said. Then to himself, "I wonder if the records have been kept?" Reassuring his momentary anxiety he thought further: "Of course the court records will show me everything, even if I can't find the others." Aloud he said to Marjory:

"Well, don't worry, little woman. It is quite a simple matter. 'Denneth Richardson, Commonwealth Security, misappropriation of funds, first part of April, 1893.' I'll soon be able to find him for you, if he still lives. After that it will rest with you as to how best to help him—though of course I'm at your command if either of you need me in the matter. In the meantime I want to ask a favor of you."

"Yes, Judge Sawyer," Marjory said, vainly trying to control the feeling of dizziness and physical illness which was passing over her at the possibility of her

seeing Denneth again. She longed with all her heart to help the man she had injured. She felt more sorry for him than she could possibly express; and yet—the serious step she had just taken—well—

"The favor is this: If during my stay in Warsaw I find conditions as bad as my talks with ex-convicts now lead me to believe they are, I want you to stand by me in all the efforts for reform which I shall at once try to put into force. Will you do that?"

Marjory looked half frightened for a moment; then she answered: "Of course I will, Judge Sawyer."

"Do not answer lightly," he warned her. "Such an attitude will take more courage than it will take to tell your mother your present plans. It will take more courage even than the facing of 'society' when society has found out the true status of your husband. Nevertheless I feel you are capable of becoming a real power for good in this line of work, because you will have suffered directly from the prison's present place in our social order if it be found that your husband has been its victim." Then breaking off, he said:

"But about standing by me. If I find it necessary to try to arouse public opinion to demand a change in our prison system, I shall be called a 'reformer,' and to stand by a reformer means opening yourself to all sorts of criticisms! Reformers, like poets, are never great until after they are dead. They are hated and despised, are considered cranks and dangerous fanatics. If, perchance, a reformer is placed upon a pedestal by an optimistic group who have the faculty of seeing a little farther than the ordinary man, society makes it its business to drag that reformer down by any means available, it matters not how vile and false. World-old forces opposing all change are ever at work, and those instrumental in bringing about an upheaval, which always results from the attempt to do away with

existing abuses, are drawn into a veritable maelstrom of lies and false accusations. Many reformers besides Christ are crucified each day! Yet notwithstanding all this, my little friend, I believe that women can help greatly in this field. As I once heard a great surgeon say, 'Women are the preservers of the race, men the consumers.' I believe this to be so. Physically and mentally a woman conserves her strength from the time of her birth, through marriage, motherhood, and old age, for the benefit of mankind. Men, on the other hand, are necessarily willing and ready to sacrifice human life, as in war, industry, and so forth. The world is just awakening to the possible good effect of this wonderful mother-instinct in women when brought to bear elsewhere than in the home. I want you, therefore, to promise to help me henceforward."

"I promise," Marjory hastened to say solemnly. Then her whole being becoming flooded with an effusion of inspiration caught from this man-with-a-vision, she said:

"We will work for you together, Denneth and I. In spite of what he did, Judge Sawyer, I now begin to see and understand his real worth. When can we begin our search for him? I feel time is very precious!"

"To-morrow," Judge Sawyer said, and he looked encouragement deep into the inspired eyes of the woman by his side.

CHAPTER XIX

"I'LL take the job," Stanley agreed. "Thank you."

The perspiring proprietor rubbed his greasy hands together, and his nose and chin met in a smile as he bowed Stanley from his cheap eating house on the lower East side. "Alwride," he said with a pleasant nasal resonance, "do-morrow borning at fife you'll be here. Verstehen Sie?"

Stanley nodded.

"It's bleasant work. Yust vashing dishes. Twelf hours, dree and von haff dollars a week. Lader, bur-haps, you make good chef. Verstehen Sie? Our women workers dey like men chefs around. Verstehen Sie?" and again his lips played hide and seek with his nose and chin, while he wickedly winked a beady eye.

Again Stanley nodded. "I'll be here," he said. And without further ado he left.

So this was to be the beginning of his life as an honest man. Three dollars and a half a week at dish washing for twelve long hours! The work to be done in a cellar almost as damp and dark as the cells of public institutions, which had been the only home he had known. It was anything but an encouraging prospect. His keen mind harked back to the ease and cleverness with which he had gained his spurs in the underworld as "Subway Slick," the name accorded him because of his adroitness in picking worthwhile pockets. His income then averaged more nearly three dollars and a half a day, while his hours—they were exactly what he chose to make them. It was years since he had worked as the tool of a "fagin." In his brief liberty hitherto he had been his own boss. In the profession of picking pockets he had become

a power to reckon with! Was he making a mistake now in giving up this profession for which he had been so well trained? Was his determination to be honest as foolish as the compensation and conditions offered now made it seem?

A picture of the various imprisoning institutions in which he had lived so long came up in answer. Once again he fancied himself going through the physical tortures accorded him there. He was sick of the shadow of prisons! If he were honest, perhaps he could escape their confines forevermore. Most men did! It could not all be chance or good luck! Some people really must be honest, he argued, though he had never met any of them! Perhaps—and his sense of inherited hope soared—perhaps somehow he could manage to get a foothold in the world, and grow to be a power in some honest way! That there was power within him he felt absolutely sure!

Taking the little Lion from the Home, together they would try to wrest an honest living from the world. His memory went back to that night many years ago, when he had tried to put this plan into action. Through the Italian fruit vendor they had failed. But now surely they would not!

Hurrying toward the river Stanley reached and rang the bell of the Home of His Lost Sheep. The watchman's brutal face appeared at the prison-like aperture, and Patrick, old and bewhiskered now, asked gruffly:

"Well, what are ye after wanting?"

"I'm after wanting the gate open," Stanley answered, recognizing the man instantly, but seeing that he did not recognize him.

"And fer what?"

"To enter through," Stanley answered sarcastically. Then remembering that the bully was not allowed to

open the gate unless he was convinced in some way of the applicant's importance, he lied glibly:

"I've just returned from a holy pilgrimage to the sacred shrine of Saint Anne," and he crossed himself. "I've brought back many a blessed token! I want to see the matron on important business."

Patrick looked Stanley up and down keenly. The ill-fitting suit which the state had so generously bestowed upon him along with the five dollar bill at the expiration of his sentence, in full payment for two years' hard labor, was almost as much identification as his prison stripes had been. Patrick hesitated to open the gates, and Stanley again tried a cleverly conceived lie:

"It's a piece of the blessed Saint's holy raiment I've brought, thrice blessed. It shall be yours," he assured him in a pious and persuasive voice, again crossing himself. Stanley had found these tokens, self-invented, useful in his career of cunning crime, and so now, though he had really determined to go straight, in order to gain his present point he once more resorted to hypocrisy and deception. The watchman still hesitated. Seeing this, Stanley drew a small metal crucifix from his pocket. Kissing it, he reverently crossed himself, murmured a short prayer, and handed it to the other saying:

"This was blessed by the Pope. Take it, wear it, and may the Holy Virgin bless you!"

The watchman's hand eagerly grasped the coveted prize. "And may the holy Saint Anthony be after giving ye health," he responded fervently, crossing himself, kissing the crucifix, then swinging wide the gates.

Stanley passed inside. The watchman's thick lips drew back from his fang-like teeth.

"It's after finding the matron inside this door ye will. To the left," he said, leading the way.

Crossing the familiar yard they entered the gloomy gray building. Stanley's heart rebelled against the sunless place. With a return of his old-time revolt, he remembered its hypocritical standards and many injustices, but remembering also that his present errand was one which would free another from its loveless confines, he tried to throw this feeling off.

Passing beneath a large religious plaque done in plaster and which was fast crumbling away, he entered the Home's dilapidated office. Taking his hat off he held it with both hands, bowing his head and keeping his eyes cast downward in silence. His attitude was one of humble respect. Thus he approached the female figure seated at the desk.

For several moments the matron made no move, but went on with the task before her.

Finally she looked up.

"What do you want?" she asked crisply, while her eyes took in his loose-fitting clothes.

"Madam," he said, stepping forward, still with the display of humility and respect, "I have come to ask a favor."

The woman's hard face grew harder. Doing things for others was no part of her daily life, and she now feared she was to be asked something which might perchance cost her some slight trouble. Besides all this, this stranger before her looked like a suspicious character! She must be cautious.

"I've come to ask if I may have a hunchback lad you have here known as the 'Lion.' I want to take him out to live with me."

The matron stared as though she could not believe hers ears. Noting this expression Stanley hastened to explain the request as best he could.

"You see," he said uneasily, feeling awkward and shy in this new and honest rôle of mediator, "I lived here once, too," looking about the dingy room, "and—well, he and I liked each other. I've got a job now and I'd like to take him out and care for him."

The woman's lips curled. "Do you think any boy would be better off with you than if he remained here?" she asked in a voice whose irritation was not far beneath the surface.

Stanley's cunning was at once aroused by her tone, and forgetting his awkwardness he said with his old-time assurance:

"Oh, madam, I know you and the attendants here are more than good to him, but you see I haven't any folks and——"

"Well, there's no boy named Lyon here," she snapped, yet not entirely displeased with Stanley's flattering manner of respectful address. "What was his number?"

"One hundred and one," Stanley answered, "but nobody called him by number. Even the good nurses called him the Lion. Somehow he was so different from the rest of the kids that he didn't seem like a *numbered child*," not realizing the irony or pathos of his words.

"When were *you* here? What is your name?" the matron asked.

"I was here over ten years ago," he said. "My name wouldn't mean anything to you. I was never called by it. Number ninety-nine was my number. But you weren't here then. I know you weren't; otherwise I could never have forgotten you!"

The woman looked Stanley up and down coldly, yet she could not help but be pleased at the boldly admiring glance which he so cleverly combined with his respectful attitude. "Did your parents remove you?"

she asked. "You said just now you had 'no folks.' "

For a fleeting moment Stanley was at a loss; but his genius for plausible lying came to his rescue and he said:

"I was adopted. A gentleman and lady by the name of Jenkins, Mr. and Mrs. Jeremiah Jenkins of 105 Waterlily Avenue, Flatbush, took me to their home. They died two years ago and left me a small amount. And now, dear madam, if the boy I am looking for is not here, please tell me where I can find him, the poor, little hunchback!"

At these words the matron's eyes again hardened, and her manner became as antagonistic as it had been before.

"I tell you I do not know where the boy is! It is impossible for me to know the details about hundreds of children who come and go in a place like this. Have you any claim other than friendship for him?"

For a moment Stanley remained silent, wondering if another lie would help him. Then deciding that her question might lead to more than seemed likely on the face of it, his caution was aroused and he dared not lie.

"No," he answered briefly.

The matron looked relieved. For ten years she had lived in ever recurring waves of dread of some one who might prove he had a legal right to do so, coming to ask about the little half wit. Though she had allowed Marjory to take the boy, she had at that time taken the precaution, against possible future difficulty, of insisting that Marjory comply with the formalities of the law and legally adopt him, even though he might be rightfully hers. But her own private and unexpressed uncertainty as to whether the hunchback really was Marjory's child had never left her mind. Had the authorities known of her conduct

in connection with her disposition of many of the children, they might not have continued her in her present position one moment. Thus she often feared detection, and lived a life wherein uneasy and sporadic endeavor to cover up her many delinquencies formed no small part.

"There is no boy by that name or number here," she said. "Nor do I know the whereabouts of any lad with such a deformity as you describe. That is positive," and picking up her pen with a finality that told Stanley he had received all the information he was going to get, she bent her head over her work.

Stanley stood silently before her. It had not entered his mind when picturing this scene in anticipation, that he would have any difficulty whatever in securing the little hunchback. He had never imagined the Home without the little fellow. He had heard the nurses say so many times that they ought not to have been burdened with the Lion, that he had assumed that when he asked for him they would immediately accede to his request. So now he felt that the matron was only pretending not to know of the boy's whereabouts. He *must* be here in the Home.

"But my dear madam, you'll soon be turning him out because of age limit anyhow. For God's sake, let me have him!" Stanley pleaded with a depth of honest earnestness.

The woman flushed. Raising her hand she pointed toward the door. "Go," she said, in suppressed anger. "Go, before I have you put out!" Then unable to resist at least a small show of her resentment at his impertinent disbelief of her statement, she added :

"Don't you think I recognize the cut of your clothes, ex-jailbird! I'll not have any 'fagins' trying to secure apprentices from this place! If you don't go

310 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

immediately I'll call the police," and summoning the watchman, who had all this time been hanging around outside the door, she commanded:

"Patrick, see that this fellow leaves the premises at once!"

"Yes, ma'am," the watchman answered, bowing respectfully. Then to Stanley:

"It's after obeying orders I am. Come on!" and he roughly took hold of Stanley's shoulder. "It was knowing the same of ye that the matron does I was," he said boastfully. "But I thought I'd be after giving ye enough rope to hang yourself," and he shoved Stanley out of the room.

Stanley was furious, but true to the perverted nature which had been bred in him during twenty-one years shut up in places where manliness and courage were no part of the lessons taught him, he now slinked from the matron's sight, showing every outward sign of humility, yet an angry vengeance filled him, making him determine to get even with her some day if he possibly could!

As he passed into the yard his eyes took in the children playing there. He still believed that the little hunchback was among them, and he was resolved to free him from the Home. This desire to help some one less fortunate than himself was the only way Stanley's better nature had ever expressed itself, and he subconsciously knew that the lad's companionship was necessary to keep him out of prison.

"Look here," he said obsequiously to Patrick as the latter led him toward the gate. "If you'll get me in communication with the hunchback lad, I'll give you —well, I've got all sorts of other holy talismans. I'll give you a piece of——"

But he got no further. Patrick was too conscious of a pair of eyes watching them from the office win-

dow. Giving Stanley a shove forward, he said loudly, so that it might be heard:

"Git on with ye! We're not after wanting the likes of you within these walls!"

Stanley passed through the gates, and they clanged shut behind him.

"I'll *not* go!" he exclaimed to himself. "Lion *is* there! I'm going to have him—the damned hypocrites!" and slinking away around a corner, he stopped just out of reach of Patrick's eyes, but where he could nevertheless watch the children at their play. He felt sure the little half-wit would not have forgotten him, and would do as he told him if he could but gain his attention.

All day Stanley hung around outside the Home, waiting and hoping; but without avail. Toward evening a brisk young policeman, striding eagerly up behind Stanley, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Here, you," he said. "I've had a phone call about you! Whatcher hanging around here for anyhow?" showing his newly won badge with éclat. "Don't you know I can run you in as a suspicious character?" taking note of Stanley's ill-fitting clothes. "Or a vagrant? Move on!"

Without a word Stanley moved off slowly down the street. The policeman followed. "Better not be seen around these parts again!" he warned him. "You've been reported once. Hanging around *this* beat is a dangerous job, believe me!" and he threw out his chest proudly. "Where do you work, anyhow?"

The officer was hardly older than Stanley. But the latter, cowed and afraid of his authority, obediently mumbled the address of the cheap eating house where he was to go to work on the morrow.

The officer made a mental note of the address, and

without another word Stanley left him and hurried away.

Stepping to a near-by telephone the officer called up the police station from which he received orders.

"Hello, is that you, Sergeant?" he asked. "This is Murphy, beat thirteen—," in a voice full of importance. "Say, I just seen a suspicious looking guy up here. He started down your way. Says he works at Dinglespitz's Emporium on Knickerbocker Street, but his doll rags look like State's Prison to me! Stand-under? Better put somebody on the job, quick. So long," and hanging up the receiver he went back upon his beat.

Since Mr. Murphy had won his new and shining badge there had been few excuses for his professional existence; and so, like others in his profession, he felt that he must make all the reports possible, even though he was not lucky enough to make any actual arrests. He fervently hoped this report he had just turned in would lead somewhere. Promotion was very essential, and promotion could not be gained unless he had proved to the city the value of his services! He wanted an increase in pay and a steady job! A merry face wherein laughed a pair of Irish blue eyes came to him at this thought. He and Katie must have that tiny flat they had looked at together! She, dear girl, hated working out!

In the meantime the police sergeant detailed one of his most ambitious stool-pigeons to watch Dinglespitz's.

The next morning as Stanley entered the garlic atmosphere of this new Jerusalem, this shifty-eyed individual entered after him, taking note of Stanley's peculiarities in looks and manner, and quickly placed him as a man he had known in prison. Later a blue-coated officer came and drew the proprietor aside.

At the end of the day, after the skin upon Stanley's hands had become crinkled and sore from the hot water and lye soapsuds in which they had been doing battle with grease and refuse all day, Mr. Isaac Dinglespitz descended upon him from the Olympian heights of the billiard parlor floor located above the grand dining room.

"Young ban," he said, his assiduously pleasant voice sounding out from the valley between the mountain of nose and chin, "I vill haff to ask you to leaf already yet. Here iss your vages."

Stanley stared as he took the proffered coins. "What's the matter?" he asked. "Didn't I do the work satisfactorily?"

Mr. Isaac Dinglespitz's hands went up and out. His shoulders were raised in a shrug. "The boliceman vass here," he said. "He dolt me vrom where you vass already! Verstehen Sie?"

Stanley bit his lips. "But I'm going straight *now*," he said. "Honest I am. And I can do good work, too. Just try me!"

Again Mr. Dinglespitz's hands, palms turned outward, waved upward in the air and his shoulders shrugged.

"I'm sorry. Bud my pizness bust be high class run! Verstehen Sie?" and he pointed toward the door, still smiling pleasantly.

Putting on his hat and coat without a word, Stanley went forth into the late afternoon. He felt desperately discouraged; but at the feel of the fresh air upon his face his new-born sense of hope and ambition returned. He thought of the little hunchback, imprisoned as he believed in the Home of His Lost Sheep, and his old determination to free him again possessed his mind.

Leaving Dinglespitz's Dining Emporium he hast-

ened uptown, and went eastward toward the river. He would once again try to bribe Patrick into telling him something about the little half-wit.

Nearing the gate of the Home Stanley saw this yellow-fanged watchdog of helpless children standing upon the sidewalk, looking up and down the street. But he did not see the stoop-shouldered and shifty-eyed individual who had skulked along behind him, and who now waited just around the corner!

Patrick leered in friendly greeting as he caught sight of Stanley's slender figure; while Stanley walked up to him with all the righteous airs of the holy pilgrim which he had pretended to be the afternoon before.

"I have a priceless vial of the oil of Saint Anne, thrice blessed," and crossing himself, he drew a sealed package from his pocket. "It was blessed at the original Saint Anne's in France. It was blessed again at Saint Anne de Beau-pré in Canada, and from thence came to our Right Reverend Cardinal. As by a holy miracle, it removes all sorrow and pain from our unholy bodies. If you will tell me how I can manage to see the hunchback, it is yours."

Patrick looked slowly around about him to see if anyone was looking. Then stooping forward he whispered:

"He was after being took by a pretty lady ten years ago. It was his mother she said she was. Here's the name and address she give when she was after taking him," handing Stanley a slip of paper upon which a few words were crudely scrawled. "It was thinking I was ye might come back," and he winked. "I stole this here record for ye," and he took the token Stanley handed him.

Then quickly straightening up he said aloud, hoping that he might be heard: "Now git along with ye.

There ain't after being room around here for sich as ye!" and re-entering the gate he slammed it, tramped across the yard, and disappeared inside the Home's dark doorway.

Stanley stood gazing down at the paper in his hands, his heart sinking at the information which he had just heard. Of course if the Lion's mother had claimed him, it was the best thing in the world that could have happened to the little fellow, but it made Stanley feel dreadfully lonely! The little hunchback was the only friend he had ever had, and now that he had decided to try living a life of honesty, he longed with all his heart to share this life with someone. Perhaps he could go to the Lion's mother, and telling her all about his former life, ask her to help him go straight.

This idea he dismissed at once. He could not go to such as she! What woman could understand such things except perhaps those painted—and tainted—butterflies of the underworld who were derelicts like himself! His courage failed him at the very thought of speech with a woman from the class who knows little and generally cares less about the sins and sorrows of the world in which *he* lived.

"Here you," a brisk voice said as a heavy hand grasped his arm, "what did I tell you yesterday? You *move on*, you hear! Or I'll know why! There's been another phone call about you just now. You'd better do as I tell you, or them new clothes won't be worn long!"

Grinding his teeth together at this new proof of Patrick's underhandedness, as he thought, Stanley walked rapidly out of sight. Not, however, before the blue-coated guardian of public morals had met and given orders to his assistant, the stool-pigeon.

This possible prospective boss of some down town

ward, who had succeeded in securing his own safety by selling the safety of everyone else he could, now eagerly tracked Stanley to his cheap lodging house. Here, discouraged and sick at heart, Stanley had entered his dirty room and thrown himself upon the bed.

Not many minutes later the blue coat appeared at the front door of the lodging house. Soon after this Stanley heard the slovenly steps of the lady of the house come slopping up the rickety stairs. A knock sounded upon his door. He opened it.

"This room's took," she said in an indifferent drawl, lazily chewing gum as she spoke and balancing an emaciated whining baby upon one hip. "You'll have to git out."

So the persecution, of which he had been told in prison by men who had tried to go straight and failed through the hounding of the law and its parasitic Judases, had begun for him! He understood the situation just as well as if he had seen and heard the officer and his accomplice who had followed him.

Stanley gathered together his few belongings and left the shabby lodging house. Night had descended. The wind had swung into the east and a cold drizzle filled the air with a damp biting chill. Beneath the arc lamp at the street corner he could see two officers and a third man apparently in idle conversation; but as he swung off up the street he noticed from the tail of his eye that two of the group had turned to follow him.

On he went. The drizzle soon turned into a cutting sleet that lashed his face cruelly. Bowing his head he tramped through the deserted streets and entered the park. Seeking the shelter of a bench beneath a low-hanging evergreen tree he sat down to think. What should he do? No work—no place to lay his head,

and—a little over three dollars in his pocket. He tried to formulate some plan. There must surely be plenty of work for willing and honest hands if only he could find it. True, he had little education in the accepted sense of the word—the State had seen to that! But he knew how to do many practical things which those proficient in conventional book learning did not know.

But the day spent in the close underground kitchen of Dinglespitz's Dining Emporium had exhausted him. Without realizing it, his eyes now slowly closed and sleep overtook him. He had not sat long in this position, shielded as he was from wind and sleet by the low hanging boughs, before a stealthy figure stole noiselessly up to him. Stopping, the shifty eyed fellow looked him over, then stole back to the officer.

"Yep, it's him," he said, "just outer the Pen. Been in eighteen months. Before that, the Reformatory. Before that, State Reform School. Before that, brat in the Home of His Lost Sheep. I knowed him there. We's graduated, so to speak, from most of them places together," and the stool-pigeon chuckled now at the safety he felt for himself. "His name is Stanley, alias Subway Slick and a few dozen others," twisting his weak lips in a smile. "Believe me, partner, I deeserves my freedom if I takes on the job of watching *him!* He's some incorrigible!"

The officer marched up and shook Stanley roughly. "Here, young fellow," he said brusquely, "I'll have to run you in if you don't move on. It's against the law to sleep in the park. Git!" and he gave Stanley a painful crack across the shoulders with his stick.

Opening his eyes Stanley saw the officer bending above him, and recalled the words he had only half heard in his drowsiness.

"I had a place to sleep," he muttered sullenly, "and you got me turned out!"

"Not me, Sonny," the officer replied. "I ain't on that beat——"

"Well, the fellow you were talking to got me turned out, then. Don't you think I'm on to your game?"

The officer smiled grimly! "Mrs. Grubbs has police protection because she *pays* for it. See?" and he tapped Stanley's pockets meaningfully with his stick. Had he not known positively from the snitch in his employ that Stanley had no standing in the community, he would not have dared speak so openly of the bribery and graft system. An ex-convict's word is never taken against that of an officer, and so the present speaker considered Stanley perfectly harmless.

"Mum's the word with me, and *them*," jerking his thumb back from whence they had come to indicate the other officer and the stool-pigeon. "Yep, Sonny, if the *dough* talks loud enough *I* can't be heard! See?" and he laughed at his own witticism. Then returning to his attack he continued:

"But it's on the move you'd better be. We've all spotted you and are on the job!"

What was the use, Stanley thought. Evidently the idea was not to allow him to stay out of prison, but was rather to see to it that he got back again, whether he had committed any offense or not. If this was so as he began to more than suspect, then what was the use or sense in his trying to go straight? Yet his earnest wish and purpose was to stay out of prison. He was so sick of the shadow of prisons!

Obedient to the officer's commands he had gotten up from the bench, and was now walking aimlessly away from the park and on through the storm. It was dark and lonely, and the whole world seemed irrevocably wrong.

As he stumbled along through the wet he did not know where he went, and he did not care! Close on his heels the stool-pigeon skulked. Occasionally Stanley would stop to rest, leaning against a lamp post or a convenient house rail; but no sooner would he assume either of these postures than he would feel a hand upon his shoulder. Looking up he would face an officer, apparently sprung from nowhere, who commanded him to move on. Finally day was on its way, and having wandered thus from the far east through the middle of New York, Stanley had now turned across town and reached that part of the city known as Hell's Kitchen and the Gas House District. Once again he was wending his way through squalor and filth, poverty and dire distress, when he spied afar off, down near a wharf of the Hudson River, a brightly lighted door, wide open. An uproarious group of half drunken Portuguese sailors danced madly about. Stanley quickened his steps and reaching the place marched straight in upon them. He had sworn to leave liquor alone, knowing that it was an enemy too dangerous to cultivate; but now wet and cold he did not care.

As he entered, the unexpectedly overworked proprietor hailed him.

"Say, Sonny," he exclaimed in friendly English, his voice reaching Stanley above the excited jabber of the foreigners, "if you'll come around and help, I'll divvy profits. Lord, these Guineas dropped down on me like hail. But they're *made of gold!*" and he motioned Stanley behind the bar.

With a glad heart Stanley did as he was bid. The spendthrift party lasted undisturbed through the night, for the little water-front saloon had police protection, too. Stanley worked willingly and well, and so it was that when the morning came, tired but triumphant, Stanley discovered that he once more had the offer of

a job at the huge retainer that Mr. Dinglespitz had offered him.

With genuine thankfulness he accepted the proprietor's offer. From this he could doubtless work up. A feeling of security, almost happiness, was his as he settled himself to sleep for the day in the small bedroom above the saloon. During the night he had not noticed a shifty eyed customer who had sauntered in for a drink! It was not until after he reported for duty the next morning, therefore, that he discovered that an officer had called. It was not many minutes after the proprietor had made this fact plain to him that he again found himself turned upon the street.

Day after day and night after night he went from one job to another, only to be ousted by a timely word of warning from one or more of his eager guardians, the fraternity in blue, or their tool, the stool-pigeon. Thus several weeks passed, and then becoming utterly disheartened at his bad luck in New York, like others in his position, he thought to find things better in another city.

Working his way out to a suburban railroad yard in spite of the stool-pigeon's vigilance, Stanley managed to secrete himself in a loaded freight car bound for Hampton. After running many risks, chief among them being the repeated leaving and regaining of the car shelter in order to beg food and water from some nearby farmer's wife en route, he arrived in that city. Not many days had passed before the influential stool-pigeon, in collaboration with the owners of his soul, the officers in New York, discovered his whereabouts in Hampton. Through local fraternities and their dark and devious ways the same old houndings were soon in progress.

To add to his troubles, old Deacon Dennison again

crossed Stanley's path. This pious saver of souls was still busily going about into byways and alleys preaching his fire and brimstone doctrine of Hell and Damnation. He seldom failed to recognize any of those who had ever been numbered among the lambs of his fold. Meeting Stanley one day while he was on one of his emotional bats, so to speak, this old gentleman began trying to reconvert him, instituting a religious hounding through which more people than ever learned of his past. Using their influence they managed to injure still further his chances of getting desirable work.

Traveling the road to honesty now began to seem not only absolutely un-worthwhile, but impossible for him. Yet for some reason or other, Stanley himself could hardly explain why, he kept on trying to travel that road. He was so sick of the shadow of prisons! He longed with his whole being to succeed in keeping away from them. It was just at this stage of his life, a time when the right sort of influence might well have turned his despairing stubbornness into a force which would have worked out his salvation, that circumstances entirely unforeseen took over the shaping of his future.

Wet and hungry one stormy night just after having lost another job because of a local stool-pigeon's dirty work, Stanley drifted into a saloon. More and more this spot of artificial cheer, the one place in which he was apt to be left unmolested, had appealed to him. The meals, so freely given away with the purchase of a glass of beer or so, were fairly palatable, and were, on the whole, a great saving to his meager purse.

This particular evening, seated quietly and quite alone at one of the tables, Stanley's attention was attracted to a man who, leaving his place at another table, had come reeling over toward him. Reaching

Stanley's table, he leaned his heavy hands upon it, and bending over began to abuse him in fluent well articulated French, intermingled with English.

Stanley recognized the man as one he had often seen in the place, a fiery fellow who was apt to get too much to drink early in the evening.

"Damn coquin! Je sais d'ou vous etes—— L'ami de ze policeman m'a racconte. *Damn thief!*"

At these words Stanley's mind recalled that he had that day noticed the Frenchman talking to a policeman upon the beat. So even here, in this little out-of-the-way saloon, his past was now known! Doubtless the usual hounding would soon commence!

On one or more occasions, having imbibed rather freely himself, Stanley became garrulous enough to remonstrate with the Frenchman. He had informed him that he was a fool to get drunk every night; but these were the only words which had ever passed between them; so now Stanley's surprise was genuine when the fellow attacked him so virulently.

Standing up, he laid his hand upon the other's shoulder. Stanley was not a man with any particular force of will, nor with much physical bravery. He had never seen or been taught either, and his heritage from his grandfather was stronger in him than was that of his father. He had suffered so many insults all his life that insults meant little or nothing to him. He laughed in the Frenchman's face, and tried to soothe his excitement.

The Frenchman continued his abuse at this sign of what he thought was Stanley's cowardice, and his words grew more vile every moment.

"Oh, go on back to your seat," Stanley said in an almost indifferent tone. "I told you last night whiskey was making a damn fool of you," and rather dizzy himself from an unwonted consumption of beer,

he was about to sit down again when the Frenchman's fist shot out in his direction.

"Voila, damn thief!" he screamed drunkenly, striking Stanley full in the face.

Stanley staggered from the severity of the blow and for a moment stood dazed. Then a madness, unusual for him, ran like fire through his veins. Picking up his empty beer bottle he fired it at the Frenchman's head. In his anger his cunning mind did not forget the position of the saloon door leading to the street.

With a crash and sound of splintering glass the bottle broke into a thousand pieces, and the Frenchman, cut and bleeding, dropped limply to the floor.

Making a desperate dash for the door, Stanley ran swiftly through it and gained the street.

This scene between the two was a signal for bedlam to break loose in the liquor crazed mob. Oaths and curses intermingled with the sounds of breaking bottles and the overturning of tables! The whole lot of drunken men grappled each other!

Stanley ran on. Dimly at first he heard voices behind him. He redoubled his pace. The voices grew in volume. Through the cloudiness in his brain which the beer had wrought he now heard a shot whiz by him! Then another—and another! Evidently a policeman had joined the chase.

Ducking his head he ran around a building, and coming out on an alley-way, doubled on his own tracks. The mob was now in front of him, running swiftly forward; but he dared not stop running or even pause for breath! If he ran with the mob he would be thought one of those chasing—himself. The humor of the situation appealed to his crafty brain, and on he went just back of his pursuers for several yards more. He knew, however, it would be only a

matter of a few seconds at most before the mob, reaching the alley, would realize what he had done!

Stanley dropped behind. It was a desperate chance, but he must take it! Bounding up a couple of low stone steps he secreted himself in a dark doorway, hoping thus to escape his pursuers when they should have turned. He had barely done so when an officer, late in joining the chase, caught the outline of his figure. With the agility of an Indian he was upon Stanley; but Stanley was ready for him. Grappling, they both lost their balance, and rolled down the steps, landing upon the sidewalk. This gave Stanley the advantage, for he found himself on top; so he began beating his opponent with all the strength he could muster.

"Hold still there," the officer bellowed, not in the least winded by Stanley's attack, "or I'll shoot!"

He managed to free the arm which held the pistol and was just about to discharge it full into his captor when, with a sudden dexterous twist of his body, Stanley succeeded in striking the pistol from his cramped grasp. Crash! It fell upon the sidewalk, discharging and sending a bullet into the policeman's side.

His grip upon Stanley relaxed, and before the crowd managed to rush through the alley Stanley had picked himself up and made off again at top speed. He was out of sight when the mob rounded the corner and halted on finding the officer lying on the sidewalk. Some one called an ambulance, which presently came clangng up; but in the interest of discovering the wounded policeman it was several moments before any of the mob remembered Stanley's part in the excitement, and again took up the chase.

The time lost had given the fleet-footed boy the advantage which he needed. Running in and out of

byways and alleys which crossed and countercrossed the serpentine streets, cowpaths in the original village of Hampton, he caught sight of an open coal hole just ahead of him. Seeing in this a safe means of successfully eluding his pursuers, without a moment's hesitation he jumped into it.

Down he went into total blackness! For a moment he seemed to feel the deepest floor of Hades raise itself up to meet him! A sharp pain tore its way through his head. A violent sickness overcame him. He lay huddled and still.

CHAPTER XX

STANLEY opened his eyes to see a sweet face floating hazily above him. The face was surmounted by a dainty wisp of an organdie cap, and beneath the face an expanse of starchy white linen dress met his puzzled gaze. He raised his hand and pushed back the edge of a bandage which half cut off his vision.

The face smiled at him. "Want anything?" it said in the most commonplace tone.

Stanley stared blankly. Then struggling to free his mind of the queer cloud of vagueness which held it enthralled, he tried to speak. Much to his surprise his voice came forth in a queer whispered croak, and the sweet face had to bend very close to catch the words.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm your nurse," the girl answered, putting her cool hand upon his wrist. "Are you fairly comfy?"

Stanley tried to move his head in order to see her more clearly, but something very stiff bound his forehead hard and fast, and he could only move his eyes. What did it all mean? Again putting his hand up he felt the swathing bandages. He was more puzzled than ever.

The nurse soothingly patted his hand which lay, thin and white, upon the bedclothes. "There, try not to move," she said, seeing the pain in his eyes. "You'll feel better soon."

Could he be dead, he wondered. Perhaps his spirit had gone into this other man's body of which he was so vaguely and yet so acutely conscious, this body with his own head fastened fantastically upon it. But if this *was* his head, why did he have an almost uncontrollable desire to say foolish things? When he had

asked the nurse who she was, it had been almost impossible for him to refrain from uttering the most wild and foolish words which had no meaning whatsoever.

"Miss—miss—," he said, trying to recall her name.

"Coudaire," she prompted him kindly, bending nearer him and smoothing out his pillow.

"Will you close down the barber shop?" glancing toward the open window near his bed.

Miss Coudaire, familiar as she was with the seemingly senseless words of an aphasia patient, did as she was bidden.

Annoyed at the fact of not being able to remember the word he wished to use, Stanley turned restlessly and asked: "Who—who am I?"

"Why, that's exactly what none of us knows," Miss Coudaire said, again smiling. "We have thought perhaps that your steady improvement lately would have enabled you to remember. But there, don't excite yourself," as she saw him again try to move his head. Doubtless everything will come back to you soon. You'd better try to sleep now," and tucking the immaculate covers about him, she glided away from his bedside.

He lay inertly, watching her trim figure as it walked away down a long lane of evenly distributed white mounds. What were those mounds, anyway?

A man's head was stuck out of the one nearest Stanley, and a hirsute face smiled over at him. It was a white, sick face; but what struck Stanley more forcefully than anything else was the fact that it was a friendly face. He had not been in the habit of inspiring such smiles as this man—and the nurse—had bestowed upon him. What in the world did it mean?

Dizzy weakness overcoming him, however, he closed his eyes wearily. For hours he lay thus, occasionally

raising his lids and looking about him at the big unfamiliar room. The grinding, gnawing pain in his head was never absent, and his mind seemed unable to do its work. Many times during the day kind voiced men and women came and went, occasionally asking him a question, or trying to make him a little more comfortable. It was toward evening that little Miss Coudaire's cool fingers were again laid upon his pulse, and he was reminded of their conversation of the morning. He parted his lips to speak, when suddenly his attention was arrested by a steady, insistent, and familiar noise just outside his window.

"What's that?" in quick alarm, trying to sit up, but finding himself unable to do so. Then he lay back and uttered a long irrelevant sentence of absolutely meaningless words, and Miss Coudaire laid a restraining hand upon him.

"Why, that's only coal being put down the coal-hole outside there," she said soothingly, pointing toward the window. "You musn't be alarmed," seeing the sudden queer look which flashed over Stanley's face at her words. She feared that he was on the verge of the delirium which had possessed his mind during the weeks of his sojourn in the hospital, before Dr. Deever had operated for concussion of the brain. "Nothing can hurt you here. I won't let it!"

Stanley's mind was too perturbed and preoccupied, however, to at once take in what she had said. The sudden grating noise of the heavy coal, deafening in its rapid persistency, had vividly awakened for the first time the memory of his fight with the Frenchman in the water-front saloon.

Bit by bit, piece by piece, he put this picture and its succeeding ones together, until the whole episode of that wild night and its preceding weeks of distress lay before him as a completed whole. He remembered

his mad plunge down into the darkness of the coal hole. The swift agony that had encompassed him then returned to him now. Why had he not been discovered?

Stanley lay staring up at the nurse with frightened, dilated eyes. The pain in his head increased alarmingly. "Don't let him get me," he tried to shout; but his jumbled and confused words reached her only as an aimless sentence indicative of his mental condition.

"You are perfectly safe, and must not worry! No one shall harm you," and she held a glass of water to his feverish lips.

Again closing his eyes Stanley made as if he were asleep, but through his aching brain her reassuring words kept running, each time they repeated themselves seeming to him to become more and more a promise of hope for the future. He lay very still, and ceasing to wonder about everything, gave himself entirely up to this hope.

Weeks ensued, and though he had not been able to understand many of the conversations about his condition which he had overheard, nevertheless he slowly gained the impression that something had happened to his brain. With this impression his habitual cunning had returned, making him intuitively determine that the wisest policy for him lay in concealing from the doctors and nurses, as nearly as possible, the fact of his mental improvement. So it was that the crazy sentence which had at one time involuntarily risen to his lips now became a deliberate act of deception.

"Well, my friend," a deep voice aroused him, "how are things going with you?" and he looked up to see a round, kindly little doctor standing by his bedside. For several moments Stanley stared without answer-

ing. His gripping fear of detection was so strong that he hardly dared speak. Then, determined to follow out his prescribed course, he made one or two sensible remarks, succeeded by a long string of confused and meaningless requests.

Dr. Deever turned to the nurse. "He is undoubtedly better," he said. "Has he given any indication of being conscious of his own identity?"

The nurse shook her head. "I do not think he knows who he is at all," she said, "though he seems perfectly conscious otherwise, just as he has the past three weeks. His confused sentences are growing fewer."

Her words added fuel to the flame of hope already brightly burning in Stanley's heart, and permanently fixed his determination never to let them guess his entire sanity. They evidently had no idea who he was. Well, the only thing for him to do was to see to it that they never did. His one hope of succeeding in this undertaking was in never acknowledging the realization of his own identity.

The doctor drew a chair up and sat down. The patient's pulse was splendidly strong. He had no temperature. The operation for concussion had been successful. He was no longer in the comatose condition in which he had lain for so many days before the operation. Also, so far as outward signs were concerned, the laceration of the brain which had injured the memory centers was healing nicely. Yet under the stress of excitement, or upon certain occasions, many of the young man's sentences were as aimless and inarticulate as ever.

Dr. Deever now wondered if these spasmodic spells of confusion were not occasioned simply from a habit of thought. Perhaps by trying he could engineer the man's mind back upon the track from which it had

deviated to the extent of making him forget his own name.

"Look here, my man," he said, in cordial interest, "I want you to tell me how you broke your head open," and he indicated Stanley's bandages, now less than half their former thickness. "You've had a bad case of concussion, but we are pulling you through beautifully!"

Stanley stared at him, a puzzled light shining in his eyes. Then thinking it best to speak, he half mumbled one of his disconnected rambling sentences.

The doctor called him up short. "Now see here," he said, trying to encourage him, "you must know better than that! How did you break your head?"

Stanley's face took on a most distressed, strained expression, as though he were making a desperate effort to recall something. Then he slowly shook his head.

"You remember your name though, don't you?"

Stanley looked even more distressed.

Dr. Deever glanced up at the nurse with a professionally significant glance. "I'm very much afraid, Miss Coudaire," he said, "that it's a permanent case of aphasia. Too bad!" and he and the nurse were very gentle indeed as they put a fresh dressing upon Stanley's head and fixed him up for the night.

There were tears in little Miss Coudaire's eyes as she and the doctor walked away from Stanley's bed. "Oh, I feel so sorry for him!" she said. "I never had so grateful a patient! Why, the slightest and most ordinary attention I give him, Dr. Deever, he greets with a pathetic amount of gratitude! I *do* so wonder who he is! It seems to me he must have led an awfully starved, loveless sort of life!"

Dr. Deever walked on, his head bowed, his hands thrust deep in his pockets. The look in the boy's eyes

haunted him. Even now his family, whoever they were, were doubtless almost frantic because of his disappearance. What could he possibly do to help this stranded fellow-creature? From a medical or surgical standpoint there seemed little hope of his entire recovery of memory. He sighed.

"It's a pitiful case," he said. "I knew of a similar case years ago, when I was working in my first State's Prison position way up home. And I'm afraid I may not be able to help him when he gets out of here, and he'll need some one to help him, goodness knows, if he has to start life all over again! I must see what I can do," and deep in thought he now left Miss Coudaire, and started down a flight of iron steps which led to the ward below.

"By the way," he said, stopping and looking back at her, "Dr. Williams will have charge of the case after today."

Miss Coudaire looked her surprise and concern.

Noting this expression, Dr. Deever said, "Oh, didn't I tell you? I'm leaving within the week." Then, going back, he said: "Come, sit down a minute, I want to tell you about it. I've agreed with an old pal of mine to establish and take charge of a Psychopathic Bureau in Warsaw Prison. I believe I can do more good there than in my present practice, and after all, you know, it is because of my practice upon poor devils like men shut up there that I have become as proficient as I am to-day. I feel therefore that it is only just for me to give them the benefit of this proficiency. With Judge Sawyer I believe that the present prison system is all wrong. I hope to do such good work upon the mentally and physically deficient prisoners, that it will prove for all time the truth of my theory that what a prison really needs, first and foremost, is a skilled diagnostician to examine, observe, and clas-

sify every prisoner immediately upon his entrance, segregating those who are a menace, and throwing others together in such a way as to bring out the very best qualities in each. At present our penal institutions are run along the most idiotic and unscientific lines. What do you suppose the public would say, Miss Coudaire, if in this hospital we put typhoid, diphtheria, scarlet fever, hysterical and nervous patients, along with tubercular and syphilitic cases, all in the same ward, taking no precaution whatever that they did not contract each other's diseases? Yet that is exactly what is being done morally, yes, and in the case of the last named diseases, actually, in every prison we have in this country! If we made the honor and the salary what it should be for such diagnosticians, we could secure the best men. Many men would like to do what I am about to do, that is, *give* their services for such work, but they cannot afford it. The result of such physical and moral segregation would be a marked decrease in the number of crimes committed, I think, for there are few sayings so true as the one that 'crime breeds crime.' "

Miss Coudaire, fascinated, sat listening to this famous surgeon. She had not understood before how really great was this man, a greatness the world would have estimated as naught because it had no price and did not shine by its ability to attract fame or gold. How she would love to do in her own simple way what he was about to do in such a splendid and unselfish way! Perhaps after she had finished her course at the hospital she could do something helpful, too. Ever since she had entered training she had felt that nursing should occupy a loftier plane than that of a mere profession, that its practice of skilled ministration and helpfulness made it more the handmaid of religion.

Catharine Coudaire loved her work. Sometimes she

felt that in practicing nursing she was leading such a real and full life that all other work seemed poor in comparison. But a theory to which it had given birth was fast taking a strong hold upon her thoughts, which were that health should be as compulsory as education. She believed that the services of nurses should be a natural and accepted part of the functions of government, to be supplied as a matter of course wherever needed, like pure drinking water or any of the other necessities which made a country habitable. Knowing from her daily experience what a wonderful lot of good they could do, she longed to tell the world of this theory, to impress upon it the benefits which would flow from its practical adoption, yet she did not know how.

"Oh, Dr. Deever," she said earnestly. "What you are about to do is *wonderful!* How I wish I could help you!"

Dr. Deever looked up with keen pleasure at her enthusiasm. It seemed to him that he had met with a surprising lack of it in hers and his profession lately. The modern trend of specializing, he sometimes thought, by which the practice of medicine has advanced from a "calling" to more scientific standards, had done away with the old-time unselfish personal service rendered by the family practitioner, who, more often than not in those good old days of his boyhood, had served as the whole town's beloved guide, philosopher, and friend.

"Perhaps you *can* help me some day, Miss Coudaire," he said, and rising he shook hands with her warmly. "I shall not forget that wish. You may hear from me. Good-bye," and this time he ran down the spiral stairs as lightly as a boy.

Miss Coudaire turned and entered the ward. It was Sunday afternoon, and visitors, flower-laden, were

streaming in to see their loved ones. Everywhere the happy eyes of the patients met hers, and she was summoned by many of them to be proudly introduced as "Nurse."

The inmates and visitors alike were a motley crew, in many instances the scum of Hampton's poorer districts; but in every one of the patients' faces, by suffering made temporarily refined, there glowed an affectionate gratitude toward the little nurse who gave them more than merely professional service. To see her moving about among the rough men, going from one bedside to another to tell some worried-eyed wife that her husband would soon be back with her and the "kiddies" again, or consoling some old mother whose boy lay so still and white that death seemed very near, showed that Catharine Coudaire was a universal mother, sharing joys and sorrows alike, and bestowing upon her patients the very essence of that spirit which, since the beginning of time, has made woman the channel for one of God's greatest blessings to His children.

From up and down the resounding ward there reached her ears gay laughter intermingling with occasional cries or moans. Smiles and tears here were fellow lodgers. The big place represented life itself, so varied and full was it of every human element. Over in the bed one removed from Stanley lay a young Scandinavian giant with a broken hip. Perched beside him sat his tiny, pink-cheeked daughter, her eyes wide while she told him the story of her dolly's like illness and successful cure. Next to him lay an old negro man whose visitor was another negro like himself. Beyond the negro the man who had smiled on that first day of Stanley's mental awakening was talking to his wife and family of six. Of all the occupants of the ward Stanley alone had no visitor, nor was

there any one who gave him more than a passing glance.

Miss Coudaire's heart went out to him. Going over she was approaching his bed when the old negro stopped her.

"Good leetle Missy," he said in his Southern dialect, which many years in Hampton had in no way affected, "please ma'am, put dese heah flowers in water," handing her a bunch of gay colored perennials. "And dese heah owanges I want yer to deevide wid yo'se'f and me—ef I kin make so bold."

Miss Coudaire thanked him kindly, and taking the fruit and flowers was starting away when the negro said:

"Bill, heah," motioning toward his visitor, "heared dat I wuz daid."

Miss Coudaire looked at Bill.

"Yassum," that gentleman said, "I heahed 'Polean was daid; but I didn't feel sure 'bout hit, so I jes' up and dressed myse'f all in black and brung him dese flowers. Ef he was daid I knowed he would like 'em; and ef he wuzn't daid I knowed he would rather have dese owanges," and he grinned, pleased at his show of thoughtfulness.

The nurse laughed. "Well, Napoleon is very much alive, William," she said, straightening the covers with her free hand while she smiled at the aged man. "He'll be going out next week."

"Humph, I doan know 'bout dat," Napoleon grumbled in anything but a pleased tone. "My misery is awful bad. So is my livers and lights and my utensils. I'se in a pow'ful po' way. Seems to me sometimes I kin hear Brudder Gabriel a fairly tootin' on his horn!"

Again Miss Coudaire laughed; but without answering walked off down the corridor to get a vase.

Coming back in a few moments she noticed a frock-

coated, feeble old white-haired visitor going about the ward, piously pausing at every bed. Rubbing his hands unctuously together he rolled his eyes heavenward as he talked. Miss Coudaire could imagine exactly what he was saying. She had heard him several times before!

She frowned. "There's that crank again!" she exclaimed beneath her breath. Then losing her patience entirely as she saw him cross over to Stanley's bed, she stopped and addressed one of the doctors just then entering the ward.

"Dr. Carley," she said, "can't you forbid that old man's coming here?" and she pointed toward the white-haired figure who had by now reached Stanley's side. "He is a perfect nuisance, and gets the patients all wrought up. Come on, like a dear, and tell him that poor fellow is too ill to be talked to!"

Smiling up at the young interne she led the way across the ward. As they neared Stanley's bed Miss Coudaire could see that he was deadly pale, and that the emaciated hand which he raised to his head was shaking violently. Angry that one of his patients should thus be made so nervous, Dr. Carley quickened his steps.

"This patient is too ill for visitors," he remarked briskly.

He had hardly finished his sentence, however, before Deacon Dennison had turned upon him. "I've known this young man for years," he said indignantly. "He is only too glad to have me come to him in this dark hour. It was I, with the help of the All-mighty, who showed him the light. Forsaking Beelzebub and the error of his ways at my teachings, he learned to claim his Maker——"

But this time it was the deacon's turn to be interrupted. Miss Coudaire saw Stanley's agitation and,

misreading it as meaning that Deacon Dennison's words were perhaps arousing his memory, she hopefully addressed the evangelist.

"The poor fellow's accident destroyed his memory so that he does not know his own identity," she exclaimed. "I've been feeling *so* sorry for his family. Now *you* can tell us how we can reach them. Isn't it splendid!" and taking a silver pencil from her pocket she held it expectantly suspended above her tiny pad. "I'll wire them at once if you'll give me their name and address."

A spasmodic quiver passed over Stanley's face, but was as quickly gone, leaving it absolutely expressionless. Murmuring a disconnected sentence he desperately hoped against hope that he would continue to deceive everyone, and that the Deacon's words would not give the situation away.

Deacon Dennison again raised his eyes heavenward, then let them fall as he said in a voice full of agonized sanctimoniousness:

"So far as I know he has no family. He is an ex-convict."

CHAPTER XXI

JUDGE SAWYER looked down upon the sea of zebra-striped men before him; and a lump rose in his throat. There met his gaze the burning eyes of two thousand citizens who had been deprived of citizenship by those who sat in judgment upon their erring and unfortunate fellows. He knew that the throng was composed of every age, but the impression conveyed to his mind was that these men were all old and gray, though prematurely so, and bent with care and suffering.

Back of him upon the chapel platform sat several women. In the coming joy of Eastertide these motherly souls, vaguely feeling the need of doing something helpful, had offered their services as a choir for Easter Sunday. Visitors were seldom allowed in the chapel or elsewhere in Warsaw prison; but the officials, having gotten wind of the fact that Judge Sawyer was that day to begin his hardly fought-for visit to the place, had thought it best to let these women have their way. Now their voices, thin and high-pitched, rang out in a resurrection anthem. The sound grated upon the sensitive ears of Judge Sawyer as he sat awaiting his turn to speak, but to the emotionally starved prisoners the anthem sounded like sweet tones from the choir of Heaven.

The song was soon over, and the prison chaplain taking his place at the crude pulpit looked over his audience with sympathetic eyes. He was a young, slender man in the early thirties, and his face, though weak chinned, was full of idealism. Sprung from a family the members of which had smugly stood aside, letting the world and its troubles take care of themselves, he had quite early in life decided that he must,

and would, do something to help those of his fellow-men who needed help. It had been a bitter struggle for him to secure his parents' consent to enter the ministry and take his present post, and even yet he showed signs of their early repression of his impulses by a certain timidity of manner. But as the inmates in Warsaw Prison had heretofore had such utterly despicable ministerial failures to preside over their spiritual well-being, to them this young apostle seemed a veritable tower of kindness and strength. In spite of his adolescence, Chaplain Lewis had gained an influence over the men which few, if any, before him had ever gained.

"Men," he said simply, "I am glad to see so many of you here today. I have something to tell you which I know every one within these gray walls will be glad to hear.

"Last week after our Sunday service I opened my Bible to choose the text upon which I should talk to you today. My eyes fell upon these words: 'A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you.'

"I was seated at my desk, and having chosen another text, had begun to write. Hardly had I written my first sentence, however, when, looking up, I saw—a new prisoner waiting, as I thought, for the routine words of advice from me as prison chaplain—"

Here he had to pause, for premature and thunderous applause had met his words. Smiling, he reached over and put his hand upon Judge Sawyer's shoulder, drawing him forward to his side.

"This prisoner's name was Bruce Sawyer," he said, knowing that the renewed hand claps showed that the news of the judge's identity had already reached them. "His number is to be A31."

Again the men applauded. Then the chaplain, proceeding, said:

"Truer words cannot be said of him than those I have already quoted; for I believe his coming here to live among us in order to learn how best to help us is the dawn of a new day! In the words of Luke, seventh chapter, sixteenth verse: 'A great prophet is sent up unto us. God has visited his people.'

"Men, I present to you your brother in stripes, Number A31."

Judge Sawyer opened his lips to speak, but found that he could not do so. Spontaneous applause, so vigorous that it shook the entire chapel, welding into one the great indiscriminate mass representing every country—yet of no country—broke loose! And then as the noise subsided he again attempted to speak, but found that his voice was not at his command, so touched was he by this demonstration of the men's belief in him! To see these poor fellows, many of them offenders tried before his own court, so quick to respond to any ray of hope or sympathy, reached his heart and choked his utterance! Even should his present plan fail and his dream never come true, he thought, this manifestation of their better natures would repay him for any discomfort he might suffer while in their midst. Emotion had now erased from his memory every word of the address he had so carefully prepared. He felt utterly powerless before these human beings who, stripped of all life's artificiality and conventions, sat before him now as primitive and unaffected by civilization as had been their remote ancestors. What did it matter what words he used—the phrases—in telling them the object of his visit? They knew he had come to help them, and unlike the lot of the great Master, who had once come in man's stature to help such as they, his lot was to receive

from them instantaneous welcome and unadulterated belief in him. Hailing him as saviour before he had even spoken, by their every look and gesture they proclaimed to him their faith in his friendship.

Oh, the shame, the crime and utter injustice of wasting and destroying such splendid material as was in these men, men whom the State had seen fit to cast aside as unworthy of help or reward. He *must* find some way to help them!

Finally controlling his voice, Judge Sawyer spoke. In his words none of his emotion was shown, but to his auditors, understanding as they did the depth of his real sympathy for them, his every sentence seemed to fall from his lips like a benediction.

"I have been a judge of the criminal courts, first in my own and then in this state, for over twenty-five years," he said. "Many of you have doubtless passed before me. My legal sanction of the jury's verdict has helped to send you here. Yet in all these years my heart has never ceased to ache for you, and while observing strictly the duties imposed upon me by virtue of my judicial office, I have consistently tried to be absolutely fair to you in my rulings and decisions."

The men sat silent before him listening so intently that the slightest rustle among them stood out as a blatant noise. Feeling the intensity of their attitude Judge Sawyer's embarrassment passed, and into his voice there stole a note of sympathy and perturbation.

"My experience on the bench has led me to believe that practically all men can be led to become law-abiding citizens if the right means are employed to that end," he said with deadly earnestness. "That our present penal system is not employing such means I have thought for a long time. I am now here to find out. Being a judge in my own case as I have been in yours, I have sentenced myself to two weeks among

you. I have reached the point in my life where my conscience demands that I know exactly to what sort of a place I have been sentencing men."

A ripple of emotion ran through the audience, but was quickly stilled when the judge went on:

"I shall wear your stripes. I shall eat, sleep, work, and live among you. But that you may be really helpful to me in doing this, and thus through me, perhaps, helpful to your whole brotherhood the world over, you must act toward each other, toward the guards and toward *me*, exactly as you have always acted since entering these walls. In no other way shall I be able to judge of the true conditions that prevail in the institutions adopted by Society, and conducted under the authority of the State, for the ostensible purpose of the punishment and the reforming of criminals."

At these words an ugly murmur ran through the crowd. Instantly understanding its import, the judge hastened to say:

"Yes, I know that all of you call this thing, this imprisonment to which the law has subjected you, by another name—a name importing the '*unmaking* of men'! Perhaps you are right—in fact, from what I hear, I am inclined to think you are. The name *you* use may be the more truthful description of the two. Whether the result of prisons as they are run to-day is *reforming* or *deforming* to mankind, is the question at issue. I am here to find out—with your help—which is the probable result. And now before I cease speaking—for I cannot speak to you or enter into conversation with you again, I believe, under the rules of Warsaw—let me say this:

"You must try to forget who and what I am. To you I must be simply one of you—a man like yourselves, who is suffering presumably because he has broken a rule of Truth and Right. None of us can do

that, you know, inside or outside of prison, without having to pay the penalty. Truth, like the law of gravitation, cannot be permanently overcome. Those who try to overcome it invariably find themselves prisoners in one way or another.

"I am here to try to help you—to discover, if I can, the truth about prisons."

Then breaking off abruptly, for he had looked at his watch and found that he had used up the allotted time given him for this address, he said abruptly:

"That is all," and turning he descended from the platform. Immediately joining the principal keeper who was awaiting him he was marched from the chapel.

The men at a given command from several armed guards standing about, formed themselves into small squads and, with a guard at the head of each, silently marched from the chapel back to their cells.

"Who is that old man there?" Judge Sawyer asked, his attention attracted by a tall white-haired man behind the last squad of prisoners.

As he spoke the man's feet reached an unevenness in the courtyard's flagging, and plunging, he grappled wildly in the air. Then regaining his balance, he drew angrily away as a guard approached him and took him by the elbow.

"He's blind!" Judge Sawyer exclaimed with deep concern, noticing the man's big unlighted eyes as he threw back his head with an expression of intolerable defiance at the guard's touch. "Who is he?"

"Number BBXII," the principal keeper answered.

"I do not mean his number, man, but his name!" Judge Sawyer exclaimed. "What's his name?"

The P. K. looked nonplussed, then answered: "We don't know the names of any of the prisoners."

Judge Sawyer frowned. "Another manifestation

of the working of our system, I suppose! As though depriving a man of his name can have any other result than to deprive him of a certain amount of his self-respect. It's damnable!" and watching the blind man's figure as it crossed the courtyard and was swallowed up by the door of the main cell-block, he asked:

"How long has he been here? Do you know that?"

"No, sir," the P. K. answered.

"Well, it's infamous to keep a man afflicted as he is shut up! I intended commencing my life as a prisoner at once, but I guess I'll see the warden about that case before I'm placed in a position where I can't. Take me to his office," pondering as to what was the best plan to pursue.

"Yes, sir," the P. K. agreed, not in the least knowing how much political influence was possessed by this crank whom he had in tow, and therefore being exceedingly anxious to stay in his good graces.

Judge Sawyer entered the warden's office. "Warden," he said, "upon my entrance to Warsaw I said that I should ask no favors except that I be treated exactly like the other men. Well, I've changed my mind. I should like you to do me a favor."

The warden smiled, exchanging a sneering I-told-you-so glance with the P. K. Both of these officials had said from the beginning that this self-appointed martyr would never really put up with the hardships of the legitimate prisoners. His was only a grandstand play,—a striving for the notoriety which invariably comes to anyone who pretends to stand for the under-dog! Doubtless like many fair dames of social pretension who, perchance, spent a hundred thousand dollars on personal comforts or a string of pearls, while working feverishly to raise a hundred dollars for a pet charity through the gratis services of some

poor musician or other, this judge was now going to ask for all the comforts of home, while apparently suffering the privations of the prisoners! The warden again winked at the keeper; but said to the judge:

"Certainly, Commissioner, certainly. Glad to do anything I can for your comfort."

Judge Sawyer frowned at these words, which conveyed to him perfectly the man's idea of the character of the favor he would request. "I want no comforts," he said. "In fact, I am asking for an added discomfort. This prison is overcrowded, I believe?"

The warden nodded, but only half-heartedly. He feared to commit himself even in this small way. He did not feel sure what was about to be forthcoming. Drat this crank's infernal interference anyway!

"And you'll have to put two prisoners in one cell in order to let me have one to myself?" the judge went on.

"Why, er—yes," the warden answered, seeing no danger in this admission, but rather an opportunity to show the commissioner how welcome, even invited, his investigations were. "It's against the rule, I believe, but we certainly couldn't turn you away, Judge."

"Then instead of putting some other two prisoners in a cell together," Judge Sawyer suggested, "suppose you put me with that blind man."

The warden gasped. Of all requests in the world this request was about the last he had expected, and its granting would be decidedly the most undesirable thing that could possibly happen. Number BBXII knew too much to be trusted alone with an investigator! During the warden's Reign of Terror, this blind man, defiant, insolent, and independent to the last degree, had been made to suffer every torment conceivable to those in charge of him; for he, poor out-

spoken soul, could not and would not allow his spirit to be broken. Feeling in the desolate misery of his eternal night that death, even inflicted by torture, was preferable to a life such as he had been forced to lead within prison walls, he had continued to say exactly what he pleased on all occasions ever since his incarceration had begun. He was by nature too high-minded to resort to the stool pigeon, as many others did, for what little comfort they could give him through their surreptitious traffic in drugs. Opium and the like were taken by the vast majority of the inmates to deaden enforced wasteful years; but BBXII, refusing this temptation, spent his time in defying and berating all those in authority who came within his reach. In consequence he had been subjected to a very hell on earth. Beaten, given the "water cure," hung by the wrists and thumbs, put upon the rack, made to wear the strait-jacket, and to tread the wheel, and forced to go through many other atrocious and barbarous cruelties of the Modern Inquisition, he was at last physically shattered by a well aimed series of blows which had left him a weakened wreck. Yet, in spite of this and his lack of sight, he was considered the most dangerous man in prison, and though the guards abused him, they still feared him much as a murderer has a sense of fear in the presence of the body he has mutilated. So now it was that the warden feared to have the judge meet this man.

After his request Judge Sawyer had stood watching the warden's face. It was a study; and realizing that he had probably unlocked the door which hid the prison's family skeleton, so to speak, his determination to meet and talk with the blind man grew apace. He remarked aloud:

"I think allowing me to room with someone would doubtless give me a better insight into the personnel of

prisoners as a class. One cannot eat, sleep, and live in such close confines with a fellow creature without getting an occasional glimpse at least into his innermost self."

But by now the warden had recovered from his surprise and was speaking. "My dear Commissioner, that would never do!" he exclaimed volubly. "Why, that man is not only vicious, but—well, I wouldn't be surprised to hear that he had any, in fact many, illnesses, which would make it positively dangerous for your physical welfare——"

"I suppose," Judge Sawyer broke in sarcastically, "that your expert hospital staff has never felt quite sure!"

The warden's thin lips drew themselves into a hard line; but ignoring the interruption he proceeded with every display of anxiety for his guest's comfort:

"He has had tuberculosis, at least, for a long time, and as for——"

"Well, that's my lookout," Judge Sawyer again broke in tersely. "I'm not afraid! I ask you as a favor that you let me share the cell with this man. Will you do it?"

The warden did not answer, but sat trying to think of some way in which he could dissuade this crank from what would be to him a really perilous course. He hardly dared refuse the commissioner's request. The commissioner was a judge, and the receiving of bribes was in itself a penitentiary offense, besides which there were other secrets in the warden's life, both public and private, that would not bear the light of day. The commissioner's brother-in-law was the Governor of the state. His brother was United States Attorney. It was bad enough to have him a "reformer," but to incur his personal enmity—— The wisest course was to employ such diplomacy as he

possessed in an endeavor to dissuade the judge from persisting in his purpose.

"My dear Judge," he said in the most cordial of tones, "you know as State Commissioner that you may go exactly where you please in the prison; but as an admirer of yours I should hate to see you deliberately run such a risk. Your object in wanting to share BBXII's cell is to get his views upon prison life, I suppose."

Judge Sawyer assented.

"Then I tell you what we'll do, Commissioner," pleased at his own astuteness, "we'll put you in the cell next to his. It will be quite simple for you to talk to him through the wall. On Sundays you'll walk just ahead of him in the chapel squad. I can give you the special privilege of conversing with him, of course, any time that you wish it. This would be a suspension of the rules in your favor, but I think you will find it practically impossible to spend two weeks in prison without this occurring."

To himself the warden resolved that he would see to it that the blind man was silenced in some way or other long before he could have had time to tattle to the commissioner.

Judge Sawyer thought deeply for several moments. His judgment told him that unless he did see and talk to this blind man his term in prison would not be altogether the success he wanted it to be. But he deemed it unwise to antagonize the warden too much. Doubtless if he occupied the cell next to the blind man's, he could in some way get far more information than the warden now supposed. He bethought him of the stool-pigeons, those "trusties" who serve both God and Mammon by receiving bribes from prisoners and guards alike. He remembered also having heard that many of the guards were not averse to having their

palms crossed with magic gold. Tact and diplomacy were needed. He would accept the warden's advice.

"Well, Warden," he said, "I don't want to go contrary to what you think best. You've indeed been helpful in your advice so far, and so I'll take it again. Put me in the cell you suggest."

The warden's muscles relaxed. He had been more nervous than even he himself knew. As a young politician he had begun his climb toward the salary of a warden over the maimed and dead spirits of his brother men. His sleep was seldom that of the just! But now, thanks to his own cleverness, he was safe. He had not for nothing acquired through years of terror the effective, albeit unwilling, loyalty of the men under his charge. The judge's investigation should be a fiasco. Number BBXII was the only man in prison whom he and his tools had not been able to terrorize into silence. But they could fix *him!* The warden smiled.

"P. K.," he said to the keeper, who had stood closely observant throughout the interview, "put the judge through the regular examination, and so forth, and then give him cell number 42 on Tier B."

Then, turning back to Judge Sawyer, he said: "If you'll just look over these data," handing him some papers while giving the keeper a look he understood perfectly, "the P. K. will see that the cell is made ready for you." And nonchalantly raising his hand to his head in an unconventional and friendly salute, the secret significance of which was thoroughly understood by the P. K., he watched him with apparent carelessness as he left the office.

Soon returning, the P. K. politely summoned the judge to his new abode. The judge's footsteps had hardly died away from the echoing corridors before the warden had summoned his most trusty tools.

Arranging themselves respectfully before him, stool-pigeon and guard alike stood awaiting his commands. Those commands were not very elaborate, nor were they couched in chosen English.

"You've seen that damn fool of a commissioner," he said bluntly. "He's entering here, as you know, for two weeks. It's up to you to see to it that he don't learn a God damned thing that's true!" and he turned to the papers upon his desk.

Judge Sawyer entered his cell. Night descended. The sounds of souls in torment reached his ears. The guards tramping along the narrow confines of the stone and steel balcony corridors that ran along in front of each tier apparently paid no heed to the new inmate as he sat in the dark trying to still the sick horror which seemed fast overcoming him. The night was cold, and the guards on duty, feeling chilly, had tightly closed the three high-set and tiny corridor windows which served for ventilation for the twelve cells upon each tier. The air in the prison, damp and foul from lack of sunshine, was now made almost unbearably suffocating by the noisome smells arising from these human cages.

He had promised to stay here two weeks, he remembered with consternation. How could he stand it! Yet his neighbors, with no expectation of early deliverance to sustain them, did stand it! As he sat meditating on the prospect before him, in the deadly stillness of the place a tick-tacking, apparently upon his wall, suddenly sounded out and made him jump.

Further away, next but one beyond his own cell, as nearly as he could guess, this noise was answered. Back and forth it went, an uncanny yet intelligent sound, until the judge made up his mind that two prisoners, his next door neighbor and the man in the cell beyond him, were communicating with each other.

This interested him immensely, and all through the night, for it continued intermittently until dawn, he lay upon his cot trying to decipher the code, though often gasping for breath in the unaccustomed noxiousness of the polluted atmosphere.

The next morning, soon after it had ceased and he himself had fallen into a troubled sleep, his number was called. Opening his eyes he saw a guard standing at his barred door.

"Time to git up," the guard said, trying hard to make his tone exactly like that which he ordinarily used to the regular prisoners, but finding it difficult to suppress the respect he felt for the judge because of his political influence. "In two minutes from now you must git in line for breakfast and the shop. Git a move on!" and the guard was gone.

Judge Sawyer drew himself up stiffly from the shuck mattress upon which he had been trying to secure some rest, and hurriedly tossing back his white hair, for prisoners were allowed no comb and brush or other toilet facilities, he did as the guard bade him, standing silently and erect at the door of his cell.

The door was unlocked by the guard, and following the lead of the other prisoners, as judged by sound, he turned the steel knob of his door and stepped into the corridor. With expectant interest he turned to look at the blind man back of him, the neighbor he had deliberately chosen. Much to his surprise he was not there, but in his place stood a strapping young fellow with a straightforward, honest face.

Judge Sawyer looked in front of him. The broad back of a short fat man met his gaze. Looking up and down the line as far as he could see, he perceived no figure that in the slightest degree suggested that of the blind man he had seen the day before. Had the warden fooled him? Put him in another cell than that which

he had requested? Wasn't he next door to the blind man after all? The blood rushed to his face in anger. If the warden had deliberately fooled him, well, he would fix *him*, all right, when he got out!

He was shocked to find himself employing the very thoughts that were invariably used by the prisoners! So even one night in prison had bred in him revenge! He smiled whimsically. Evidently he would not make a very model prisoner.

At a command from the guard in charge, the long somber file of men now marched forward, their slovenly and unambitious feet dragging raspingly along the stones of the hall, the chains and balls many of them wore clattering and banging along noisily.

Overhead in the tier above the same thing was occurring. Judge Sawyer looked up and up. There were one, two, three, four floors full of these same shamed men silently filing out from the prison darkness into the walled-in courtyard where restricted rays of sunlight touched them with hope and cheer. There were several dozens of these men, yet this wing in which he stood was only one of the many such cell blocks that composed Warsaw Prison.

As the squad of which Judge Sawyer was a member passed through the outer prison door and was ordered to cross the courtyard, low whispered words reached his ears. He looked quickly around to see if the young fellow back of him had spoken; but the young man's face was entirely expressionless, and his lips, though held slightly apart, did not move. He was looking disinterestedly ahead, and as the judge turned upon him his eyes did not waver for an instant.

"Yes, it is I talking," the judge heard him saying, though his face held its same passive expression. "Don't let them see you look at me. If they catch us, everything will be up for us both."

Judge Sawyer, thrilling with the uncanniness of this queer conversation, did as he was bidden, and marching on, listened as the queer hoarse whispers, utterly without intonation or inflection, proceeded.

"I heard you in chapel yesterday. Every one of us boys would die for you, Judge. You're doing a man's work in a man's way! The poor blind fellow sends you a note," and Judge Sawyer was thereupon conscious of something in his palm, without knowing how it got there. "Being blind, he's kept shut up in his cell; and the warden isn't really going to let you talk to him or any of the rest of us; don't fool yourself! Dumb men tell no tales, and God knows the tales we could tell in this place——"

But he broke off. A guard was approaching.

The whole performance had been so queer, so weird, so like Alice in Wonderland, that Judge Sawyer felt as if he were in a dream. In all his dealings with crime and criminals, this was the very first time he had come in contact with the "silent language" of prisons. No wonder that convicts became abnormal and dangerous men, he thought. He longed to answer the young man, and to ask him questions; but he did not dare. In some way the knowledge of his whispers must have reached the guard, for that companionable gentleman did not leave Judge Sawyer's side during the rest of the journey.

On they shuffled, first to the mess hall, and thence, after a disgustingly unpalatable meal, to that part of the workshop to which his squad had been detailed. Entering, Judge Sawyer discovered he had been given what the prisoners themselves consider the pick of prison work—that of tailoring. Yet how ill chosen this was! Thinking of himself as a real prisoner, with his superior education, how much more use to the state he could have been in some other capacity.

All through the day he sat in the ill lighted, ill ventilated cellar room, sewing long seams upon drab cloth so cheap and coarse that it felt like sacking to his sensitive fingers. He was working upon a pair of trousers to be worn by a man when the State should have released his body—his spirit would never be released, the judge thought bitterly.

It was the policy of Warsaw to force each prisoner to "specialize" in his work. This did not mean specialization in the generally accepted sense, but was merely the State's way of seeing to it that a prisoner's work was made as monotonous as possible, thus robbing him of any incentive or interest in his daily life. This, of course, was a necessary part of his *punishment*. Prisoners were seldom given jobs for which their former life had fitted them; but each and every one of them received their daily employment as they did their cells, by the simple rule of allotment.

Judge Sawyer did not understand this, and so expected that the next day or so would see him transferred to the caning or shoeing department, or where the prisoners made brooms. Not that he cared any more than they what he did, but he wished to be able to thoroughly investigate every branch of the prison's industry. On various occasions before his entrance, when he had complained that the prisons were conducted upon mediæval lines, he had been reassured by the other commissioners that Warsaw was one of the most up-to-date in the country. He had believed this because of his experience in the South, where a few years before he had visited a prison in which the inmates were allowed to do no work, but were kept locked in their cells every day and all day. The statistics showed that there were few among the inmates, except for the negroes, who did not have to be trans-

ferred to the insane asylum before the end of their sentences.

About the tailor's shop armed guards stood. Upon a raised platform at the end of this room there was an officer in charge. Like a sphinx he sat, a loaded rifle across his knees. Huddled together around an ill-smelling kerosene stove a dozen or more prisoners sat sewing. They were not allowed to talk. The guards did the talking instead! The epithets they used were supposed to keep the prisoners at work; besides which, talking was the only form of entertainment the guards had. Today, however, their epithets were much milder and less frequent. They had all received their warning of the meaning of Judge Sawyer's presence among them. Prisoners and guards alike felt the strain.

The long dull day wore on. The close air in the shop mingling with body odors and the smell of the kerosene stove made the judge's head ache violently. Here and there a man moved restlessly, a groan breaking from his lips. Toward evening one of them who had become more and more restless, without any apparent reason swore aloud. A guard, surprised, but ready for him, strode over in his direction and leveled his pistol threateningly.

"Here, you!" he said, "cut that out!"

But before he could reach the far corner where the man sat, tailor fashion, the man had gotten up upon his feet and had begun to scream hysterically. Throwing the long seam he had been sewing to one side he began beating his head with his hands, his eyes rolling wildly and froth foaming from his lips. His shouted words were inarticulate, and the other prisoners, looking toward him in alarm, realized he had suddenly gone mad. A wild cry of sympathy broke out among them, and jumping to their feet they massed themselves together like huddled cattle.

In prisons it is not safe for a guard to stop and reason why. They are in the position of a lion tamer who knows that if one lion among a cageful made docile by cruel mastery attacks him, it is a matter of only a moment before they will all be tearing him limb from limb. Without a second's warning, therefore, the guard upon the platform fired! As his bullet reached the screaming man's leg he fell in a limp heap. But afraid to stop firing the guard turned his revolver upon the others. Shots fell thick and fast, while relying for their own safety upon their armed strength, every one of the guards backed toward the door.

Judge Sawyer was horrified. So *this* was one of the uprisings in prisons which the public heard so much about! These were the criminals who endangered the guards' lives!

"Stop that firing!" he thundered, his big voice booming out above the mêlée of sullen antagonized men, now pushing and shoving each other as they strove to escape the fusillade. "You shall pay for this!"

The guards thus reminded of the judge's presence ceased their fire, and running into the hall banged the steel door.

Judge Sawyer turned to the men. "Don't be nervous," he said. "They'll hardly dare attack you again!"

At the judge's reassuring words and manner of command the men immediately became quieted. For some unaccountable reason apparently no one had been hurt but the prisoner lying upon the floor. His companions now gathered about him. They dared not speak, but in their eyes Judge Sawyer read the smouldering spirit of hatred and the desire to kill their oppressors.

Kneeling, the judge raised the injured man's head. The poor fellow's convulsion had passed by now, and

his large eyes held in them the appeal of a hurt child's as he looked up at the judge.

"I went bug-house, I reckon," he whispered in the hoarse silent language. "What's the matter with my leg?"

"You've been hurt," the judge said in soothing evasion. "Better keep still, the guards have probably gone for a stretcher."

Just then the steel door to the tailor shop opened, and the scared face of the head guard peered in. Seeing that the "Riot" had been quelled, he entered, followed by the other guards.

"Form in line there!" he commanded, covering the group of prisoners with his gun. "Forward, march!"

Silently they obeyed, and the long file shuffled across the tailor shop. Judge Sawyer stood still.

"You go get a stretcher at once," he said. "This man's hurt."

Furiously angry, but not daring to show it, the head guard commanded two of the others to do as the judge suggested. Quickly returning they lifted the injured man, and assured that he had gained his point, the judge now joined the prisoners who marched across the courtyard and back to their cells. Had he known that the injured man was cast into the rot-pit instead of the healing comfort of the hospital, he could not have felt the immediate return of interest for the blind man next door to him.

CHAPTER XXII

JUDGE SAWYER was sitting upon the side of his cot, trying in vain to forget the distressing experiences in the tailor shop. It was clear to him that he must not make a row about it if he intended to stay in the prison. If such a thing as this had happened before his very eyes, what must be the condition of things when there was no restraining presence! It was his duty to discover everything he could about the conduct of the institution. Getting up he began tramping back and forth. Presently he remembered that he had not as yet read the blind man's letter, which he had slipped up his sleeve on finding it in his palm that morning. Taking this out he unfolded it, and holding it up to catch the dim light, began to read.

"Dear Judge," it ran. "'A prophet' has indeed been sent up unto us; for yesterday in your voice I read the note of hope for this city of the living dead.

"From this cell, the only place on earth I know as home, I, a man without a country, a slave of his worst self, made so by injustice suffered at the hands of those authorized to exercise the power of the State, but still possessing a better self asleep within him, now pleads with you to help us, and will try to show you how. The officials here will never let me really see or talk with you, rest assured of that; and so I take this means of communication. Old, blind, dying of tuberculosis, the sand in my hour-glass is running low. Soon the darkness of my last resting place, as typified by the sightlessness I now know, will be mine. I do not ask for myself, therefore, but for those who will suffer after me, that something be done to rectify conditions so merciless that were they generally known in their

actuality, our present slavery would be counted by the people as worse than death, and the conditions themselves no longer tolerated!

"I have hardly dared eat or drink today. Many men have succumbed within these walls on less provocation than you have given the warden and his tools by your request to be placed next door to me. Dead men tell no tales! But I am not afraid. I know that, save for my few missteps, I have not dishonored the Maker in whom I believe. Lest something should happen to me, however, I now write you these lines, hoping that the thoughts indulged in during the years of suffering which I have endured, may in some way forward the work I feel sure you have been called to do."

The man's pathetic words had brought a lump to Judge Sawyer's throat. How his heart ached with sympathy for him!

"On Sunday you said you believed that if the right methods were employed toward us, that we could become law-abiding citizens. I believe that you are right. I have been thinking for years of the means which should be employed to accomplish this; and so now I ask you, best and kindest of friends to the zebra brotherhood, is it right that God's free creatures be caged in filth and degradation? No matter what their offense, has man the right to shut them out from even the sight of God's world, their birthright? If Society requires their restraint, should it not be under such conditions that at the end of their day of toil they may be able to refresh their spirits, to the degree that in them lies, in the magic gold and crimson fairyland of evening, there to drink deep draughts of joy and life?

"Can it possibly improve a man's soul to see eternally the black bars of hatred, rather than to see from

his window long shadow fingers pointing across a carpet of green and violet, it might be to an open bay, sail-dotted? Would it not be better for him, and so for Society, that he feel the soft night-curtain of silence absolute enfold him, instead of the uttermost darkness of Tophet which reigns in his cell, wherein the sounds which reach him, from degraded men and guards alike, are so consistently awful, that the memory of the thrush's songs which were wont to wake him in boyhood seems only a mockery now?

"If he could arise to gaze through maiden mists arising Minerva-like from the lacy spray of waves across blue water—if he could see morning's birth, and realize that the blush with which she greets the sun's kiss is a prophecy of his regeneration into a better and purer man, would this not help him to be so, rather than to have the nature-sounds of God's goodness forever shut from him, and in their stead only the hideous strophes and anti-strophes of the grimy spirit of darkest crime?

"Made by kindly and constructive means to fully appreciate the iniquities of his past, would it not help him in his efforts to achieve a better future to hear with a love-filled, and not hate-filled, soul the song of nesting birds? To scan with growing understanding the foam-flecked sea in all her moods? Watching the blossoming of spring, to know that his future *could* be full of life's beauty and promise, too? And that when his lessons in good citizenship were learned, and he was allowed to become a part of the outside world again, to be assured that there was a place in it for him to work and learn of peace as deep as truth?"

Judge Sawyer gasped. Why, the man had a remarkable mind! His thoughts were poetic, almost inspired. It did not seem possible that a man could draw such mental pictures when shut up in prison; and yet he

suspected that these very pictures were probably what had enabled men of mentality to retain their sanity. He read on:

"Those of you who are still citizens of the United States say if we who through crime have lost our citizenship are made too comfortable—if our regenerating institutions—God save the mark!—are made too attractive, we would commit crimes in order to enter prison. Does it seem likely to you that such a thing can be true? Does a man deliberately contract tuberculosis or cancer in order to enter a place where he is given the kind care of a magnificent State or Board of Charities? Yet the situation is much the same.

"Of course I am speaking of men, not parasites or degenerates—of which there are as many outside as inside of prison. Such creatures should be dealt with apart from criminals, and have nothing to do with the question. I speak now of men like myself—men who have broken one or more actual statutes of the law. Understand, I am not excusing their or my acts. Unlawful acts are inexcusable. But men are men, whether prisoners or freemen, and in order to keep discipline, promote right thinking and a hope of an uncriminal future, they must be treated as men.

"Situate your prison in a place where God dwells, therefore, not in a barren spot where the destructiveness of man has defaced the bosom of Mother Earth. Beauty is truth, and truth is what we who commit crime have lost sight of. Nature and her healing balm of beauty is bound to help us. I repeat, therefore, build your prisons in the open country."

Judge Sawyer in wonderment counted the ensuing pages. Evidently, he thought to himself, the flood-gates of the man's years of silence had been opened, and he was pouring out his very soul in an effort to

express the thoughts which had so long been forming in his mind. The letter with its scrawling crooked lines seemed indeed pathetic to the judge. He recalled the proud sightless face he had seen the day before. The indomitable will and spirit which shone through this blind man's every word made him determine to reach him personally as soon as possible. Now, however, he continued reading his letter:

"An adequate prison should have a general receiving station. In charge of this there should be efficient medical, surgical, and physiological specialists to examine and classify the incoming men. After these men are classified, they should be sent to branch prisons, where the maximum of efficiency at a minimum expenditure of time and unprofitable labor shall be produced. The present system does not benefit either the State, Society, or the prisoner himself; and, as has been conclusively established, absolutely fails as a deterrent of crime, rather inflaming and multiplying the evil it pretends to heal.

"One of these branches should be a co-operative farm. This for the class of prisoners who, as, for instance, those physically sick, need that kind of life to revive the good in them. For those who have a trade there should be shops in which to practice that trade. For those who have no trade there should be a training school in which every inmate should be required to learn that for which he is best adapted. Governmental contracts pertaining to national preparedness could be easily given to such institutions, as is done in Germany, where many of the prisons have the exclusive right to make military uniforms.

"Pay each of these working men a living wage, part of the wage to go toward *retrieving the wrong which he had done his fellows*. If a thief steals your purse, does it help *you* any to lock him up and, with-

out giving him a chance to pay the money back, be taxed by the State for his maintenance? Would not it be better to pay that man for his labor, have him repay you, and in addition be able to continue supporting his family at home, instead of making a pauper, or worse, of his wife, and criminals of his children?

"If a man be a drunkard, cure him. Drunkenness is a disease. If he be a lunatic, treat him as a lunatic. If he be mentally deficient or a moral degenerate, keep him segregated; but treat him decently, and in some way find a means of cultivating any good traits he may possibly possess.

"Criminals are men morally sick. Help them to help themselves. Warsaw prison and others like it are hives of revenge, breeders of crime, and are places of and for lost souls. Make your new prisons hospitals and vocational and industrial schools, with a governing spirit of moral inspiration dominating the administration. Have the men under military control. Teach them military tactics. Drills would be good for them physically, and through them they would learn how to obey, to observe the discipline which Society requires of all its members. In time of trouble men so drilled would be of great help to their country.

"When all this is done and your government faces the prison problem from the angle of pity and a desire to make and not *unmake* future citizens, it will be approaching the question through reason and not prejudice, through love and not hate. Until this is done and the State ceases to punish crime by itself committing essential crimes, civilization cannot make any appreciable move upward."

Here the sentences scrawled off the last sheet of the brown wrapping paper which was crumpled and torn. The judge stood up. The blind man's words made

him feel uplifted and inspired. He would communicate with him through the wall of their cells.

He knocked upon it. Immediately an answering knock reached his ears. Oh, if he only knew the tick-tack code which he had heard the night before!

"I've received your letter," the judge said, his lips pressed close against a crack in the mortar of the wall.

There was no answer.

He tapped again. An answering tap came back to him; but that was all. Evidently the masonry of the walls was too thick to allow the sound of words to penetrate them, unless spoken very loudly.

He went to his barred door. He could at least speak through that and be heard by the man next door. The two doors were necessarily so close together, owing to the narrowness of each of the cells, that such communication must surely be accomplished very easily.

"I got your letter," he repeated, putting his hand to one side of his mouth so as to throw the sound of his voice sideways and into the other cell, "and I want to talk to you."

A guard strode up. "No gassin'," he said. "Prisoners ain't supposed to talk."

Judge Sawyer frowned; then remembering the gossip about the guards he had heard outside the prison, he said:

"Now look here, Bud, I've got to talk to that blind man next door. I've got no 'spondulics in my jeans,'" taking a whimsical pride and delight in having so quickly caught on to the slang of the prison, and feeling much like a naughty boy as he used it; "but I'll see to it that you get ten dollars that is in the office safe in my name."

The guard drew away with an air of well-feigned

indignation. He was one of the warden's trusty lieutenants, and no commissioner could catch *him*.

"You could be punished for that there offer," he said with dignity, pretending to know naught of the judge's identity. "Do you think I'd take a bribe? Not much! Though being's as you're new at this here prison game, as the P. K. tells me, I won't report you this time," with a maudlin show of kindness.

The fellow's part had been exceedingly well played, but Judge Sawyer's astuteness was too keen for him to be entirely fooled by it, though he did not know, of course, just how much knowledge the man really had. He ceased his monetary attempt to reach the blind man. Some other way would doubtless open up soon. He knew that the prisoners, in spite of all rules to the contrary, and even in spite of any possible honest guard, *did* communicate with each other almost any time they chose.

Going back to his cot the judge reseated himself, and once more perused the remarkable letter. In a very few moments the big gong that announced the mess hour boomed out, and the shuffling sounds of life in the cell block began.

The bolts flew back, and opening his door he stepped into the hall. He looked around to see the friendly face of the fellow who that morning had given him the blind man's letter; but in his place stood a much smaller man with a face seamed and scarred by dissipation and disease. Judge Sawyer instinctively turned his head forward. He felt that this man could not be trusted. He wondered where his friend of the morning was!

After a silent meal the men were all marched back to their respective cells again. As each man approached and stopped in front of his own particular

cell, the judge noticed the fellow whose face he had so mistrusted stop at the cell next door to his.

In spite of all the silence about him and the sense of cowering fear which it gave to the whole atmosphere, Judge Sawyer had not yet learned his lesson.

"What are you doing going into that cell?" he asked the man. "A blind man belongs in there."

The prisoner questioned did not answer; but a guard, hearing the sound of Judge Sawyer's voice, marched up.

"Here, there," he said, "no gassin' allowed, I tell you!"

But by now the judge's suspicions had been thoroughly aroused. It was very queer, he thought, not only that he had not seen or heard anything of the blind man since his own incarceration, but it was still more strange that new and hitherto unseen prisoners had marched behind him both times that he had left his own cell that day. Something was wrong!

"Where's that blind man?" he asked the guard, as all the prisoners entered their doors, which clanged shut behind them. "I requested especially that I be put next door to BBXII, I think that is his number. I'm anxious to talk to him."

With difficulty the guard controlled his look of amusement at the judge's expense.

"He's probably dying," he remarked bluntly. "He had to be removed to the hospital to-day. He had a hemorrhage."

Judge Sawyer's heart misgave him at these words. The poor pitiful creature. The man's remarkable letter seemed to burn him as it lay in the outer pocket of his striped coat. Then his suspicion being still further aroused, he commanded the guard:

"You go get the warden. I want to speak to him."

The guard again controlled his look of amusement.

and taking a certain delight in playing his rôle of innocent ignorance, causing perhaps a considerable degree of annoyance to this crank commissioner, he said :

"I'm sorry, Boss, but us guards ain't supposed to take orders from prisoners. We's working for the state," and he walked insolently away.

The judge in his growing apprehension and anxiety for the man whom he had been most anxious to see and learn to know, now lost his temper.

"Look here," he called after the guard, "you evidently don't know who I am. I demand that you get the warden. I won't be treated this way," and he felt his face flushing violently.

At these words the guard's cat-like humor vanished, and he felt afraid to play with his mouse any longer. So far as he was concerned, the warden was all-powerful at present, but politics had been known to change. The commissioner was very highly connected, he understood, and with a good-natured grin he returned to Judge Sawyer's cell.

"I'll take a message to the warden for you," he offered, assuming an air of graciousness that sat ill upon him. "Of course it's against the rules; but I'll do it, being's you're new at the game. I always feel sorry for you jail-birds."

"Rules be hanged!" the judge exclaimed irritably. "You go tell that warden that I've changed my mind, and that he's got to let me out of this place. Double-quick, too!"

The guard took himself off. Upon his face there was a well-pleased, gloating expression. So he had helped his master to frustrate the commissioner's plans! He was indeed to be congratulated. It would surely mean a raise in salary and prison perquisites to

him! He hurried from the cell block to the warden's private apartment.

Judge Sawyer paced up and down. He was angry with himself now for determining not to stick to the plan which he had first adopted; and yet he honestly felt in his present mood that it would be a grave mistake to do so. He could not let that poor blind man die without what few personal comforts he might give him. And also he must try to procure at least a little more information about his experiences in prison. His letter had shown that his point of view was not that of the ordinary prisoner, but rather that he possessed a master-mind which, having been thrown back upon itself, had developed a keen ability to look into the future from an unbiased standpoint.

Judge Sawyer hated to disappoint the other prisoners. He feared that to abandon his plan of staying among them two weeks would make most of them lose faith in him. Yet discretion was the better part of valor. He must give up his former scheme and begin to work along the lines of the bigger and better plans suggested to his mind by the blind man's letter.

His cell door opened. "Well, Commissioner," the warden's well modulated voice greeted him. "So you want to see me, eh? I was afraid you'd find it too hard! The effect of a place like this upon a man of your caliber is very different from its effect upon one of the criminal class—a class entirely apart from us and our ways of thinking. Now what can I do for you? Want to be released, I understand."

Judge Sawyer found it difficult to retain his usual equanimity of manner. How he would like to tell this fiend in human form exactly what he thought of him! Instead he said in much his usual voice:

"Yes, warden, I've had enough of it. I must bathe

370 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

and dress at once. Something important has called me out."

The warden exchanged a sinister look of gratification with the guard, and then leading the way, escorted Judge Sawyer from the cell block and on out until they reached the warden's apartments, so different in their sunlit spaciousness from the vile holes he had just been in.

As Judge Sawyer bathed and dressed his mind was full of plans for the future, and into his eyes had come the look which Marjory had so often seen.

"Warden," he said, running lightly down the steps to the warden's office, where that gentleman had preceded him and was now busy at his desk, "I'm going over to the hospital to see that blind man. Kindly get one of your men to pack my bag. I'll return here for it in a few moments."

The warden almost fell out of his desk chair, then scrambled to his feet. His face went deadly pale, and his hands shook.

Judge Sawyer watched him, understanding that he had in some way taken him unpleasantly by surprise.

The warden swallowed hard two or three times before he spoke. By now a deep purple hue had taken the place of the pallor. Finally he controlled his voice enough to speak.

"Why, er—the man is not in the hospital, Judge. The truth is——"

"He's not dead?" Judge Sawyer broke in, alarmed at the warden's manner, and at once recalling the pathetic words of number BBXII's letter coupled with what the guard had told him.

The warden slowly shook his head, and the judge, regaining his assurance, said in a cold voice of warning:

"Be careful what you say, Warden. In spite of all

you did to keep me from learning anything, I've learned much! Don't add a lie to the other things I know about you!"

The warden straightened up, his low-browed, bullying face assuming a look of indignation which fell quite short of any convincing quality.

"The fellow became extremely obstreperous while you were in the tailor shop to-day," he added with a great show of holding his outraged temper, "and we had to resort to the punishment cells."

"And *I* was told he was dying of a hemorrhage!" Judge Sawyer broke in.

The warden gave a start in spite of himself. "Why, er—he did have a slight passage of blood, I believe, but it was only from anger. He is quite all right; and so strong it took two guards to hold him! He was er—trying to injure himself," the warden lied glibly. "Such desperadoes as he is often resort to that. We had to put him away in order to protect him from himself as well as to protect ourselves from him. He's a dangerous and vicious man, I tell you, Commissioner."

Judge Sawyer looked skeptical at this most improbable tale. He had *seen* the man. It was impossible to believe that the poor emaciated creature had enough strength to do anything except shuffle painfully across the courtyard. But holding his counsel the judge said:

"Then I shall go there to speak with him. Come on," and he made for the door.

Not, however, before the warden had managed to convey by a look toward one of the guards a direction that he, a protection ghoul of the warden, must reach the underground punishment cell by a quick route known only to the warden's office, while the warden

372 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

himself, accompanied by Judge Sawyer, reached it by well-planned circumnavigation.

The guard scurried out through the back door, and the warden, once more his voluble self, led Judge Sawyer down a long flight of steps, in and out and around through many passageways and finally down into a cellar corridor.

The backs of two guards carrying something awkwardly between them were seen disappearing through a door at the opposite end as Judge Sawyer approached the punishment cells; but in his eagerness to see that the blind man was safe, he did not notice this.

Judge Sawyer and the warden reached a sheet-iron door with small openings at the top and bottom. The warden inserted a key. Judge Sawyer's anger was boiling at the very idea that a sick and blind man should have been placed in such a hole, and had opened his lips to speak when a guard, stepping up, saluted them.

"He's been took out of there, Warden," he said in a voice well coached in seeming courtesy. "He didn't stay but a few minutes. The P. K. was afraid it might be bad for his condition, so he taken him away to the hospital this morning."

The warden gave the clever guard an approving look which the latter quickly translated into dollars and cents.

Throwing the door open, the warden showed Judge Sawyer that the cell was empty.

"Well, I didn't say anything before, Warden," the judge remarked, "but you doubtless know what I think! I'm glad the P. K. at least had sense and compassion enough to remove him! We will go to the hospital," and turning on his heel Judge Sawyer led the way upstairs again.

By first one pretext and then another the warden

delayed the journey a few seconds here and a few seconds there, until by the time he and the judge had reached the hospital, number BBXII lay quietly settled on a long white bed near the door.

Judge Sawyer went up to him. The man's head was bandaged, and about his wrists there were fresh strips of gauze through which the blood was slowly seeping.

Judge Sawyer looked at him critically. He was in a deep stupor. His breath came in labored gasps. Across the pallid, nobly moulded face there was, as the judge thought, the shadow of the cross. Intense sympathy sprang to the judge's eyes. A hand was laid upon his shoulder. Quickly glancing about he saw Chaplain Lewis looking at him, a queer expression upon his face. It was strangely convulsed, and yet in it there had blossomed a strength of purpose which had destroyed its usual sensitive reticence.

"Judge Sawyer," the chaplain said, his slender youthful chin taking on a surprisingly square look, "there has been foul play somewhere. This poor man's wrists show he has recently been put through what the demi-god there," looking boldly toward the warden, "calls 'putting the fear of God in his heart'! I don't know what the poor fellow had done; but he is blind and ill and should not have received such punishment. I was present just now when he was hustled in here. His peaceful sleep is the result of *this!*" and the chaplain indignantly produced a hypodermic syringe which had been dropped upon the floor in the hurry of preparation for the commissioner's inspection.

The scene that ensued was long to be remembered by warden and guards alike; and when, late that night, Judge Sawyer tiptoed from the crude hospital room, it was to leave Dr. Deever, his life-long friend for

374 THE IMPRISONED FREEMAN

whom he had telegraphed, anxiously bringing the poor wreck upon the bed back to life and consciousness.

Public opinion—the entire state should be aroused! Steps should be taken to destroy forever the black blot of crime which had for so long been represented by Warsaw Prison. Judge Sawyer determined he would fight the warden and his tools—would fight the political ring and its rottenness and would awaken the layman and his justice if it took the last drop of blood in his body!

He boarded the train for Hampton.

CHAPTER XXIII

STANLEY, upon Deacon Dennison's identification of him, had been forced not only to cease his histrionic endeavors to convince the hospital authorities that he still suffered from aphasia, but with no display of gentleness or sympathy for his weakened physical condition, had been promptly arrested and taken to the city prison, that "devil's antechamber" in Hampton.

In this place the careless carnival of filth and impurity which holds sway is not confined to permeating the walls, floors, bunks, and the entire atmosphere, but is even more evident in the unremitting obscenities of the inmates, whose flippant foulness of thought, deed, and speech was appalling. It was an old scene to Stanley. He had been in the New York Tombs many times; but now in his changed mood, wrought by the kindness of little Miss Coudaire, Dr. Deever, and even the old negro who had continually tried to amuse him, this prison seemed far more disorderly than any he had ever known, and more as if it "embodied the careless civic attitude toward growing insanity and crime." A half-way house between respectability and disgrace, it held much the position in the community of a jolly ne'er-do-well. It was the missing link between criminal and uncriminal man, as judged by Society.

Instead of the little nurse's kindly ministrations, Stanley now received the attention of slovenly minded subordinates who were there to gather the harvest of tips which they extracted from high and low alike. Theirs was not a serious or brutal job, but rather one where a livelihood was possible without any danger of overwork or anxiety—a sort of a major graftship

which was passed along to them for polling services rendered at some time or other for the benefit of the virtuous political powers that be.

A city prison is very different from those conducted by the state, and among its heterogeneous mass of the gutter's scum, poor dazed foreigners, men of culture, petty thieves and the like, there exists a freedom of life and speech which is entirely absent from the latter. Many of those imprisoned fully expect to be released long before the time comes to transfer them to a more permanent place. The guards have little power, and so physical abuse does not exist. But so low, so thoroughly rotten and full of debasing influence is the whole perditional place, that self-complacent citizens avoid it as they would a place of pestilence, yet take no steps to eradicate the wholly unnecessary evils which have become associated with it.

Like those cases in the courts where through the interminable postponements and delays, secured through technical procedure, a plaintiff will starve before justice awards him his dues, so Stanley waited day after day and week after week for his summons to the courtroom. Finally, after more than a year had passed, word was brought to him one day that the prosecuting attorney was ready to take up his case, and that it had been put upon the court calendar for the following week.

* * * * *

The trial was soon over, and Stanley with an increased bitterness against the existing social order heard himself sentenced to State's Prison, the next step, and the highest step, in his curriculum of crime.

For the first time in his life he felt that he would be willing to suffer self-annihilation. During his months in this city prison he had acquired a lesson which all

the other institutions of which he had been a part had by chance failed to teach him—that of resorting to drugs.

Prisoners consigned to the Hampton Prison are allowed to keep whatever personal property they have, and so during recreation hours spent in the courtyard and hallways, Stanley practiced upon his fellow prisoners the only profession he knew. He soon possessed enough money to enable him to enter the arms of Morpheus in poppy fields of slumber where rosy dreams come true—until the awakening!

It was after his trial and during his last night in this place that Stanley attempted to cheat the state of one of its future slaves by the administering of an overdose of this Elixir of Death. But the stars in their courses had reserved something better for him, and the next day, in spite of his struggles, Stanley found himself upon the train bound for Warsaw Prison, sentenced for his attack upon the Frenchman.

As he looked out of the car window he recalled those other journeys he had taken for a like purpose. In memory he went over a journey of many years before, in which he had seen the beautiful forest world for the first time. As if in a dream he now saw again that village of cosy houses, sparkling golden pink stream, and flashing birds. Once again the air seemed filled with the hope and love of their rollicking song—but almost before he knew it he was inside of that black wagon with its grated door—he had reached a big bare building—he was in its dungeon, the strait-jacket crushing out his very life. The scene changed. The daily routine of the Reformatory passed in hideous detail before him; but from this picture, too, his characteristic of hope had soon drawn him. He was out in the world, a free man. His heart was full of tenderness for the lad who was less fortunate than him-

self. He would rescue him. Together they would be happy—

A dark figure followed him—persecution, protected by law, surrounded him. Then came the wild night of his experience in the saloon, and after that—

Even now in memory the sweet kindness of Miss Coudaire's smile interrupted his revery and warmed his heart. The little round doctor with his beneficent eyes seemed a prophecy of good; and yet—

He was going back to prison. Sunk lower than ever, degraded utterly by the additional mastery which opium now had over him, he was going back to an existence worse than death.

* * * * *

"Right in here," a pleasant voiced young man in a dark gray uniform said to Stanley as he stepped from the automobile in which he had come from the station. "Your case will be attended to in just a moment," and leaving behind them the guard who had accompanied him from the city, the uniformed official led Stanley into a big cheery room, just off from an office which looked like that of a hotel.

The young official softly closed the door, and Stanley found himself quite alone, except for an elderly gentleman seated at a big comfortable desk piled high with papers. This person had not raised his eyes at his entrance, but had continued to write, folding, and then neatly piling together many stacks of letters.

Stanley stared about, nonplussed. What in the world did it mean? Where was he? He seated himself and waited; but his gaze roved curiously about the sunlit apartment which overlooked a garden full of bloom on the south, and a wide grass-grown court on the north. Why had he, a prisoner, been brought to a place like this? There must be some mistake.

He was supposed to have been on his way to prison. He felt the whole world whirling about him at the queer inexplicable situation in which he now found himself. He recalled what he had heard about the eventual effects of the drug he had been taking. Perhaps that was the explanation—this was only a drug-dream, an hallucination!

But no, he realized that the effects of the drug had begun to wear off. He felt sick and nervous because of the lack of it.

There were many windows in the room, with boxes of growing plants beneath. Ranged along all four of its sides, against restfully tinted walls, were clean shelves of books. Above these there were rich-toned pictures of woods and fields which made one feel the very breath of spring.

Stanley stirred in his chair. A discomfort such as he had never known took possession of him. He felt much as a rodent burrowing in the dark would feel if it were suddenly confronted with a blinding ray of sunlight. Fascinated, his eyes would not stay downcast upon his shabby knees as he tried to make them do. There was something about the room which caught and held his attention in spite of his feeling of awkwardness and perturbation. Unaccustomed as he had been during his entire life to anything even remotely approaching attractive surroundings, this neat and simple room seemed palatial indeed.

Presently a sound of tramping feet reached him from outside one of the open windows at which white curtains blew gently to and fro in the soft May air. Tramp, tramp, went dozens of feet. A military command reached his ears; and then as a full brass band filled the air with martial music, wheeling from the shadow of the house and swiftly attaining the courtyard there marched into view battalion after battalion

of men. Stanley could see that they were dressed in a trim uniform of dark gray, their bright buttons catching and reflecting the sinking sun as they wheeled, halted, dropped arms, and then came to attention, a long splendid line of them.

The elderly gentleman at the desk rose and approached Stanley.

"They drill very well, don't they?" he said pleasantly, turning his eyes toward the window.

Stanley stood up and looked in the direction of the cadets, and though the other gave him a keen sweeping glance, when Stanley again looked at him his gaze had apparently continued fastened upon the men outside.

Stanley put a shaking hand to his head. Had the drug really proven traitor instead of friend at last? A violent trembling seized him. The scene was bound to be an hallucination! Through white lips he managed to speak:

"Where am I?" he asked hoarsely, a terrific longing for the drug sweeping over him. In spite of its treacherous dealings he *must* procure a dose at once, or he would go mad, sure enough, raving mad! "For God's sake, tell me where I am?" he repeated, his eyes rolling wildly.

Judge Sawyer laid a kindly hand upon his arm. "You are in Warsaw prison," he answered. "I am Warden Sawyer. And you?"

Stanley collapsed into a chair, his eyes set, his lips working horribly. So it was true. The drug was playing him false! Nevertheless he must have more in order to withstand the shock.

"Morphine," he whispered. "For God's sake! Quick!"

Judge Sawyer understood the request perfectly. He received each day many such wrecks as this poor youth

before him. He had learned through experience that such cases must be handled scientifically. He rang a bell. The uniformed official who had conducted Stanley into the room appeared.

"One of the internes, quick!" he commanded. "Morphine case. Collapse. Hurry!" and he bent over Stanley's bowed and shaking body.

"Everything will be all right in a minute," he encouraged. "I've sent for the drug."

"A young physician, also in uniform, now entered the room. Deftly rolling up Stanley's sleeve he administered a hypodermic injection of that which had become as necessary as air to Stanley.

Soon the drug began to have its desired effect. The patient's eyes lost their look of wildness. His hands relaxed their rigidity, and a half smile parted his still trembling lips.

Warden Sawyer did not speak, but stood waiting until such time as the man's nerves were under control. He knew exactly what was going through the young man's mind—he had seen so many, many like him during the past year and a quarter since he had managed to expose the rottenness of Warsaw Prison and put it upon the sound basis of a humanitarian institution. Those like Stanley coming to the prison with the expectation of meeting with the usual cruel and unjust reception tendered in the vast majority of prisons, were invariably unnerved at first by Judge Sawyer's new method.

When the dose of morphine had temporarily restored Stanley's habitual air of indifference to his surroundings he exclaimed to the elderly gentleman standing before him:

"Say, what you giving us? I know this ain't a prison."

Judge Sawyer's keen eyes had seen the compara-

tively freshly healed scar upon Stanley's forehead—he could guess almost to the last detail the poor fellow's recent career, he was so exactly like hundreds of others. So now he felt he could venture a move toward gaining Stanley's confidence. It was one of his pet theories that incoming prisoners must not be questioned in the old diabolical manner as to their age, name, parentage, former crimes, and the number of times they had served sentence. He felt that their stories should be gotten out of them by a more friendly and gradual process. By showing sympathy and understanding he usually succeeded eventually in getting the *truth*.

"Of course you know Warsaw isn't what it used to be," he said. "We are conducting it more upon the lines of a hospital——"

He saw Stanley's eyes brighten at these words; and so taking his cue he went on:

"I can see you have been feeling pretty rocky lately, eh? Head got smashed up, or something, didn't it? Too bad. I'm sorry—I had the same luck once," and he pointed to a few faint scars upon his forehead. "What hospital were you in?"

"North End Waterfront," Stanley answered before he thought. Criminals are ever careful not to tell anything about themselves, not even those things which may chance to be to their credit. So far as their own past is concerned, they consider silence golden.

"They've got good doctors there," Judge Sawyer remarked, following out his carefully conceived method.

Stanley's expression changed but little, yet there was a slightly added glow in his eyes.

"And wonderful nurses!" Judge Sawyer went on.

This time he got the result for which he had been working. Stanley's whole expression changed. Into

the emaciated face, with its good yet passive, almost weak features, there had come a burning light of enthusiasm.

So the young man had appreciation, Judge Sawyer thought approvingly to himself. Deep down in him, beneath the outward crust of hardness, or its equivalent, indifference, which a life of crime had produced, his was a nature capable of gratitude and loyalty. The judge smiled.

"Well," he said, "we will probably have to put you in the hospital here before assigning you to your eventual position among us. You need building up. By the way, what name shall I enter you under?"

Judge Sawyer knew the young man's entire history. He insisted that the names of incoming prisoners, along with all possible penal data, be reported to him before their arrival. He felt, however, that asking the prisoner the details of the history of his life was an excellent test of the prisoner's mental and moral state. He had found that few responded to him truthfully at first. The influence of the old régime still clung, and in spite of appearances, they could not at once trust this reformed way of accomplishing results.

Stanley hesitated. A man drawing moral power from so treacherous a thing as a drug seldom has character enough not to lie, even though he knows that it can do him no possible good. Liquor, drugs, lies and crime are children of the same parent. Stanley did not want to tell his real name, and yet there was something in this man's face, something in his compelling eyes, which made him answer truthfully.

"My name was Stanley, that's all, till I got out of the orphan asylum. Then I took the name of Stanley Gray."

Judge Sawyer made a mental note of this until such time as he could enter it into the prison register

with the additional commentary, "parentage unknown." Nine-tenths of Warsaw's inmates had the same words after their names. Judge Sawyer sometimes thought that this big prison, into which he was throwing all his energy, was only a vast cauldron into which the children of sin were sooner or later cast by the prison's original founder and principal feeder, the orphanage.

Breaking into his own thoughts he remarked aloud: "I'm sorry to see you feeling so badly, Gray. A young man of your age—twenty-one, isn't it?"

"No, nearly twenty-four," Stanley answered, hardly realizing he had done so.

"Well, as I was saying," the judge went on, having also made a mental note of this statement, "a young man of your age should be as robust and fine a specimen of humanity as those boys out there," pointing out the window to the battalions who were now standing, caps held upon their breasts, in an attitude of reverent attention as the "Star Spangled Banner" was played and the Stars and Stripes were lowered for the night.

Stanley's eyes followed the judge's, and a queer expression passed over his face. Once again doubts assailed him.

"Say," he said in his old-time manner of one used to being persecuted, and trying to be manly through the harassment, "what yer kiddin' me this way for? I don't get you. Where am I, anyhow?"

Warden Sawyer turned to a framed list of names upon the wall, at the top of which was printed the words:

"Fraternal Welfare Association of Warsaw Prison."

"Don't you see I've told you where you are?" he said. "I would not lie to you."

Stanley's expression did not change at his words; but again looking out of the window he asked:

"But what's that moving picture army out there?" pointing to the cadets now returning the way they had come. I've been in prison all my life—that is practically all my life—Reform School, Reformatory, and the Pen, to say nothing of the Home, and I never saw anything like that before in *prison!*"

"No, I'm sorry to say few of us have," Judge Sawyer agreed. "But we shall!" and a triumphant note sounded in his voice while his eyes seemed to see a vision afar off. "The answer to your question is very simple, my boy. Warsaw Prison is now an institution for the remaking of men. We have the men under military discipline and training. This room in which you stand is the warden's office—*my office*. Soon you will be taken to the hospital. We now use that means instead of a dark cell for a receiving station! The greatest physiologists, psychologists, criminologists, as well as neurologists, of the state will examine you. After that they will keep you under their care for a while until you are strong and well. By that time all of us—who are your friends and not your enemies, remember—will see to it that you are taught to do the thing for which you are best fitted. After you have learned a trade and been given a job (for Warsaw has done away with the old slavery system, and pays her men, making them in turn pay their outside debts), it *simply rests with you as to whether you stay a criminal or become a man!*"

At the judge's words a queer sense as if of being drawn out of himself, of being carried away, went through Stanley. He felt excited and yet comforted and inspired in a way he had never felt before. He longed to show the warden what his kindness meant to him. He was eager to commence his new life and

try to prove to this man that he was worthy of the trust he was putting in him. A feeling swept over him akin to that which he had known only once before, that of his affectionate solicitude for the hunchback; yet even now he could not bring himself to realize the reality of his surroundings.

Again there returned to his mind the memory of the hope which had filled him on his escape from the Home of His Lost Sheep. Could it be that life held for him any possibility of good? There had already fallen to his lot some prophetic happenings, as for instance the revelation of true kindness in the tender ministrations of the little hospital nurse! Tears, born of weakness and the shock of the unforeseen promise of better things in store for him sprang to his eyes.

Judge Sawyer, seeing that Stanley had stood about as much emotion as was good for him, said :

"I know what you have been through, my boy. I know it has been little short of hell! I want to help you. I believe in you and want you to become one of my boys, such as you have seen drilling out there," waving toward the window. "You have wronged Society, but Society has wronged you, too. Here I hope you will find a remedy for all your suffering." Then turning to the desk, he again rang for an official.

"Maloney," he said, addressing the young man who now entered, "kindly conduct Stanley Gray to Dr. Deever."

"Yes, Warden," he answered, saluting.

Judge Sawyer again turned to Stanley. "Remember what I have said to you, my boy. As soon as Dr. Deever consents, I will see you again."

Stanley followed his guide from the room and Judge Sawyer returned to his desk. In the judge's eyes there burned the look of one inspired; and reseating himself he resumed the task of sorting his mail.

A sudden thought occurring to him, however, he jumped up and stepped to the door.

"Maloney," he called to the man who was conducting Stanley down the sunny hallway, immaculate in its white paint.

"Yes, sir," he replied, coming to respectful attention at the warden's summons.

"Suppose you ask Richard Dennison if he is able to take this young man to Dr. Deever. I need you. You'll find him in the roof colony."

"Yes, Warden," Maloney answered saluting, and motioning Stanley to follow him, they proceeded down the hall.

Judge Sawyer returned to his desk. Yes, that was the idea, he thought, pleased at himself. Richard Dennison was decidedly the man to handle this special case. Richard Dennison always handled the warden's most difficult cases. In spite of the fact that he was blind and very ill, his tremendous strength of will and defiant determination to use his good influence in the prison, had made of him one of the new warden's most trusted and valuable helpmates. The judge often thought that this man, who had suffered so terribly at the hands of the State, was now proving himself of more worth to the State than was the warden himself. After all, it had been Richard Dennison's plan which had been accepted for the remodeling and reforming of Warsaw; for after Judge Sawyer had discovered him that night in the prison hospital over a year ago, things had moved swiftly for them both. Having succeeded in arousing the people to a realization of the disgrace of the state's principal prison, from his own purse Judge Sawyer had started a fund for a new prison. The fund had attained large proportions almost over night, and the state authorities, accepting this aid, had added the necessary appropriation from

the state treasury; and so Judge Sawyer's dream had quickly gained reality.

Stanley and his guide entered a long glassed-in pavilion on the roof of and running the entire length of the great building, which was constructed in the shape of an E. On either side of this pavilion, with an outlook off across tilled farmlands succeeded by woods, there were rows of beds in which lay gaunt men, many of them too ill to notice Stanley as he passed.

"These are our tubercular inmates," Maloney informed him. "Many of them were literally dying in dank dark cells when Warden Sawyer came to us."

They had reached the farther end of the passageway, and were about to descend a flight of iron steps, when Maloney stopped and turned back to meet a tall white-haired man whose large eyes were strangely wide and staring, and who had just appeared from the central wing of the pavilion.

Addressing him with an air of respectful affection, Maloney chatted with him for several moments, and then handing him some papers from his pocket they approached Stanley as he stood by the stairway rail.

The man was blind, Stanley noticed with a pang of sympathy!

"Stanley Gray," Stanley's companion was saying, "this is Richard Dennison, the president of our Fraternal Welfare Association."

The blind man put out his hand, his eyes roving about trying to focus themselves in the right direction. "Glad to see you," he said, his lips smiling, though his eyes were strangely stilled and saddened. "I believe our warden has given me the privilege of conducting you through the prison before turning you over to Dr. Deever," and his face lighted up at the reference to both these men. "It's a wonderful place, this Warsaw

Prison. I believe it will revolutionize the whole penal system!"

Stanley stood speechless. To be told that he was to be guided about and shown the prison by a blind man was just one more of the impossibilities and absurdities of this drug-dream through which he was so evidently passing. An impulse to test his own waking state by a shout was checked only by his innate sense of sympathy for the man before him. Richard Dénny's hand was now fumbling along the wall in an endeavor to get his bearings; but his proudly held head and splendid face, in which two eyes, as dauntless as ever, looked bravely out into the dark, was turned toward Stanley as he spoke.

"Isn't it wonderful to see those fellows," he said waving off in the direction in which he thought his sick companions lay. "And just to think how they used to be shut up in filth instead of in this God-given gift of sunlight and air. Oh, I tell you we're a happy lot of fellows since Warden Sawyer came to us! That man has meant an awful lot in my life and—if I had been fortunate enough to have been under his guardianship when I was your age—an age only a few years more than that at which I made my first misstep, well, I guess I would not have to—fumble for that stair rail now. Where is it anyway?" bravely smiling and feeling out until he finally caught at the railing by Stanley's side. "Here we are," and he rapidly descended the stairs, followed by Stanley, the while talking in an animated, happy voice.

From one window after another of the corridors through which they now passed, Stanley was shown the various points of interest—the snug little cottages of the farmer-prisoners, where those who stood highest in good behavior were allowed to have their families come to visit them occasionally—the big machine

shop where parts of governmental guns and other mechanical apparatus were made—the pottery works, the electrical plant—the laboratory. Down near the water's edge a small shipyard might be seen, a busy hive in which men in the near gray uniform of this Spotless Town were energetically moving about.

Finally Stanley spoke: "Say," he said, just as he had said to the warden, "watcher kiddin' me this way for, anyhow? I can't get you. If I'm going to be sent up, why don't they send me up and quit this foolin'?"

His companion paused and turned his inspired face toward him. He, too, like the warden, was used to disbeliefs from incoming prisoners. Being himself a prisoner who had been regenerated through the judge's good works, he was now one of the new type of trusties who had in large part replaced the services of men hired as guards by the State. Warsaw had become a self-governing body of men, where those who wished might rise to a respected and useful place in the government of the prison. Understanding the mental condition which was now induced in Stanley's mind, used as it evidently had been to the old idea of punishment rather than education for convicts, he did not now attempt any explanation. He had found that words of explanation did not help matters much. If he was dealing with old timers, as in Stanley's case, a few weeks of the new prison life was the only thing which could convince a prisoner of the reality of the reform which had swept over Warsaw Prison. So now completely ignoring Stanley's question, he led him rapidly through another corridor and into one connecting the middle wing of the E with the other wing.

Then he spoke: "Right in there," pointing to an open door, "is our school. When you are better you'll

doubtless have the pleasure of studying there. We have classes from the first grammar school grade up through the entire curriculum of high school—a really fine course!"

Stanley looked into the room where he saw many heads, old and young alike, bent eagerly over rows of desks. A young man upon the platform, dressed just as were the other occupants of the room, was lecturing to the assembly. Stanley's ear caught only a few of his sentences before they passed on.

"And so it is," he was saying, "that when you get out of here and go to farming, you will find that soils of different sections, or in different parts of the same section, are severally adapted to the propagation of some particular product, dependent upon the proportions of the chemical ingredients which they respectively contain. Therefore, it is a matter of the first importance, before deciding what crop you should attempt to raise, to have the soil of your farm subjected to chemical analysis for the purpose of ascertaining what crop will prove most profitable."

Stanley looked in utter astonishment at his guide, now walking ahead of him. He could not get his bearings! Was this strange and independent blind man who walked along as if he could see, telling him the truth? Was this indeed a prison? It could not be! In prisons men were not taught what to do when they got outside—not except in the manner he himself had been taught, accidentally, and that a profession which only led back to the prison again.

But his puzzling thoughts were cut short. "Here we are at our goal," he heard his guide say. Passing through a double glass door Stanley found himself in a hospital ward. Through this he was led into a private office at the end. Immediately upon their entrance a familiar looking little man dropped some

paraphernalia he had been working with and stepped up to them.

Stanley's heart quickened as he recognized him, but he made no move. He remembered Dr. Deever's kindness to him, and would have liked to have spoken; but it is against the ethics of a criminal to claim friendship with any man first. Most of them have been fooled too often, and prefer to have the other make the advance.

"Dr. Deever," Richard Dennison said, "I have a new patient for you—Stanley Gray. The warden puts him directly in your care."

The little doctor put out his hand, greeting Stanley with a few words and with a kindly manner full of personal interest.

In his surprise Stanley could not take the proffered hand, but stood staring at the man before him.

Dr. Deever took no heed of this, however, and proceeding cheerfully, said:

"Glad to see you. Come right in here," and he led the way to a small office off from the first. "You have the record, I suppose?" turning and addressing the blind man.

Richard answered in the affirmative.

"Good," the little doctor exclaimed, taking the proffered papers and reading them.

"Um," he said, finishing them quickly. "Too bad." Then again looking at Stanley, he went on:

"You have my sympathy, my boy. It's a bad habit you have acquired; but we'll soon get you so you won't need old Morpheus any more. Won't we, President?"

Richard smiled. "We certainly will," he said heartily. "Nothing like Dr. Deever here for putting heart and soul and health into you," and feeling out he placed his hand affectionately upon the doctor's shoul-

der. Then a sudden paroxysm of violent coughing seized him. His poor blind eyes took on a strained expression which was dreadful in their sightlessness, and groping out he caught hold of and desperately clung to the back of a chair, his breath coming in short gasps between the tearing, racking cough which shook his emaciated body.

Across Dr. Deever's face there passed a distressed and alarmed expression. Gently he took hold of the suffering man and almost bodily lifted him into an easy chair where, the paroxysm having soon passed, he lay limp and white.

Dr. Deever bent over him anxiously, his hand upon his heart; and as Richard regained a little of his strength which had left him at the convulsive attack, Dr. Deever said, taking his hand in his:

"Now look here, my friend, I hate to preach, but you know what I've told you! That ambition of yours is too big for your strength, entirely too big. You simply *must not* do so much. Neither I, nor any of the rest of us," waving toward the ward in a comprehensive gesture, "can possibly be responsible for your life if you do! You've done more now than a dozen ordinary men."

Richard smiled, then broke in: "My life, you know—the little that's left of it, is for the boys in gray, Dr. Deever. What other good is it?" and a bitter quality momentarily showed itself in his smile.

"Your life is worth more than anybody's in the place!" Dr. Deever exclaimed. "You must know that by now. Goodness, man, look at this prison." Then in a livelier tone: "I'll put you to bed and *tie you in*, if you don't begin to obey my orders! You are doing too much. And now I want you to go back and lie right out in the sun for the rest of the day."

Richard Dennison rose, put his hand to his cap

in a martial salute, his big eyes looking as he thought, estimating direction by sound, directly into those of his friend. "All right, Captain," he said playfully. "This is your ship," and with a few cheery words to Stanley he deftly felt his way from the room.

There were tears in the little doctor's eyes as he stood watching the feeble figure, once so stalwart, bravely making its way down the ward, greeted on all sides by the patients he passed.

Dr. Deever turned back to Stanley. "That's the finest man I ever knew!" he exclaimed heartily. "Inside or outside of prison! I hope to God the warden is right, and that there are many such as he—but I doubt it!"

Stanley had witnessed this scene in silent amazement. He felt as far from the true solution of the situation as ever, and so when Dr. Deever turned his attention to him once more, he did as he was bidden without the slightest show of interest or understanding.

"Take off your shirt, please, Gray," he requested Stanley. Then something familiar about the youth's personality striking him, he said, "Weren't you in the North End Hospital a little over a year ago?"

"Yes, sir," Stanley answered.

"You didn't then have this—habit the warden tells me you have now, did you?"

"No, sir."

Dr. Deever thought deeply for several moments. He remembered the case perfectly, a case of aphasia. So this case had resulted as many did. The boy who had lost his identity on being released had doubtless gotten into bad company! His incarceration in State's Prison was the result. Dr. Deever recalled what he had said to Miss Coudaire about his keeping up with and befriending this youth. He had failed. After all he knew of the fellow's helplessness, he had allowed

his urgent call to Warsaw and his ensuing work there to erase these good intentions from his mind. He blamed himself bitterly for Stanley's present condition. In some way he must atone to this poor boy for the wrong he had done him.

A thorough examination of Stanley followed, and almost before he knew what had happened he found himself in one of the dozen neat white beds outside in the ward.

Weeks passed, in which the patient was led through the very doors of purgatory in order to rid him of the enemy which had so sapped his will and strength; but when the end of the heroic anti-drug treatment came, Stanley found that he was stronger and more vigorous than he had ever felt before.

During the days of Stanley's illness the blind man had sat much by his bedside. The queer silent youth had aroused Richard Dennison's interest and attracted him greatly. In most instances in talking to men like Stanley, Richard had found one of two things existing in their minds: Either they possessed a deep and expressed feeling of bitterness against the law and all things pertaining to its so-called course of justice, or they had a maudlin and sentimental manner of often-times repeating their desire for reformation, simply and solely because of the kind treatment received at his hands. But not so Stanley Gray. Silently keeping his own counsel, he gave little response to either Richard Dennison, Dr. Deever, or Warden Sawyer, who each in turn had given him a great deal of their time and attention.

Many councils were held over him by these three indefatigable reformers, and every good influence in the prison was brought to bear upon him. Long before he could be allowed out of the watchful care of one of the specialists who was studying his case, he had

been taken into the horticultural garden which he had noticed from the window of the warden's office. Then this silent and diffident newcomer had been shown the different educational and industrial advantages of the new Warsaw at close range; but never had there been any appreciable response from him. One day, however, when he and the blind man, under the guidance of one of the physicians, had walked through the strip of woodland which in its virgin beauty lay just beyond the tilled farms within the prison's township, Stanley's whole being had brightened. A glow coming into his sallow cheeks, over his face there slowly spread an expression which no one save little Miss Coudaire had ever seen. Richard Dennison had asked Stanley to be eyes for him during his walk, and much to his and the psychologist's surprise and delight, they had found by Stanley's answers that the youth had a real and reverential love for the great out-of-doors.

Richard's heart recalled the joy his own youth had taken in nature's freedom, and felt a renewed and ever increasing interest in the boy's eventual reformation; while the psychologist, thinking of it entirely from the scientific standpoint, began planning some scheme whereby this good point in Stanley's make-up might be used as a base to build upon for his ethical development.

But try as he might during the several months which now quickly passed, it seemed impossible for any one to actually find out the state of Stanley's spiritual growth, for though he was perfectly manageable, and always well behaved, having been put at several minor trades and mastering them quickly, he showed real enthusiasm upon but one subject, and even in that his reticence made it impossible for him to express himself—he had become absolutely devoted to his blind friend. The warden had gained his admiration

and affection, as had Dr. Deever also; but it was for Richard Dennison that his face lighted, and it was for him that his mind, which was still chaotic from its attempt to adjust itself to the new conditions, threw all its prejudices aside and responded with a warmth of love which the youth himself was pathetically unable to express in word or deed.

It was not long before Dennison, having failed to heed Dr. Deever's warning, found he was unable to arise from his white bed upon the roof and go about the prison. His strength, in spite of his determination not to give up, seemed to be fast slipping away. After the slightest effort the dreaded paroxysms of coughing shook his frail body, and so he found that it was necessary for him to stay very quiet. In consequence Stanley spent most of his spare time at the man's bedside.

One day after Warden Sawyer had been worrying particularly about his old friend's state of health, he came across a book and a letter directed in the same handwriting among the piled-up mail upon his desk. Opening the letter, an expression of affectionate admiration gleamed in his eyes as he read its lines.

"Dearest and oldest of friends," the letter began. "I've completed the new book. After my inspirational conversation with you last fall and your many wonderful letters since you began your present work, I have felt it my duty to tell the world the 'story of my life,' as it were. Truly I feel I was so despicable in my course with respect to my husband, the memory of whose love for me is my greatest treasure and reproach, that I would go through anything now to redeem my conduct. Of course the real story is covered by a fiction plot, but perhaps its moral may in some way reach other wives and mothers situated much as I was situated then, and make them *think*—before it

is too late! Affectionately, Marjory Matthews (Richardson)."

Judge Sawyer untied the dainty book of "Letters." Tears were in his eyes.

"Poor child," he murmured. "If only I could have found those records for her!" And then opening the small volume he perused its pages with an ever growing interest.

As he finished the pathetic story it told and laid the volume down he was conscious of some one standing at his elbow. Looking up he saw Stanley Gray gazing at him, his face full of the light which shone from it when he spoke of the man he loved.

"Warden," he said, his words coming with an effort in his evident embarrassment, "now that my reading has improved, don't you think—couldn't I—wouldn't it be kind of nice to surprise Mr. Dennison by reading something out loud to him? He's pretty discouraged to-day."

The warden jumped from his chair in enthusiasm. He was more delighted than he could possibly say by the youth's offer, showing as it did his desire to be helpful.

"It certainly would be nice, my boy," he said enthusiastically. "Here, take this little book," handing him Marjory's volume. "It's exquisite, and Richard would like it, though it's a little sad. Good luck to you!" and with his optimistic eyes, which had started so many discouraged men on the road to lasting happiness, he watched Stanley who, flushing like a pleased schoolboy, left the room with the volume beneath his arm.

CHAPTER XXIV

FUMBLING awkwardly out, Richard Dennison grasped one of Stanley's hands and, holding it tightly in his, said hoarsely, his voice shaking:

"Read—read that over again—that last paragraph."

Stanley read the last few lines of Marjory's book in his stumbling and uncertain, yet earnest, manner.

"And so it is," they ran, "Son o' mine, that in these letters I have tried to tell you that because your mother was a thoughtless, frivolous woman, the man she loves was forced to leave you and me for—God alone knows where! Each night I have prayed that if he is living, happiness may have come to him. Through all these years I have looked and longed for him, but in vain. In my heart *chéri*, I now know that he was no more guilty than I. It was for me that he committed the wrong; and it was my most culpable conduct that induced him to do it. I tell you this from the agony of remorse that grips my last hours. I realize that I have never known until very lately what life and an appreciation of its true values might have meant to us both. Seated at my window I look off across blue waters. I see the sun sail low. It sinks behind a hill and is gone; but its afterglow fills the sky. So it is with your father, boy. Though actually he has been out of my life for many years, the golden glow of his pure love—"

But Richard Dennison had become strangely moved by these simple words read from a book written in the popular vein of the modern story writer.

Looking up Stanley saw that his beloved friend's face was convulsed with emotion. His sightless eyes were raised as if in appeal toward the soft blue sky

above him which he did not see. A radiance suffused his features. Then a dry sudden sob broke from his lips.

"Why, Mr. Dennison!" Stanley exclaimed, alarmed at this sound. Putting the book down he bent over the man upon the bed. "What's the matter?"

Richard Dennison's thoughts came back to earth at Stanley's question, and he answered in quite his normal tone:

"Oh, nothing—nothing, my boy." Then after several moments more, in which he had lain very still, he remarked:

"The author of that book was writing of something she knew, Gray. The story has the earmarks of truth," and he sighed.

Stanley closed the book and sat gazing off across the panorama of the prison town. The story was a pathetic one, and even to his unimaginative mind it seemed very real. There were many truths in it, too, which had never occurred to him until he had learned to know and love Richard Dennison. This love now filled his heart to overflowing. He longed to express in words what the past few months in prison under his guardianship had meant to him; but as usual his diffidence would not allow him to speak. All the gentleness and loyalty in Stanley's nature had responded to this afflicted man, just as it had responded to the one other person in the world Stanley had really loved—the little hunchback.

With this feeling for Richard Dennison there had also come a desire to win his respect and approval. This youth who had never known any prolonged good influence, except for little Miss Coudaire, was now aroused to an ambition of which he had not known he was capable. He mentally struggled to find some outlet besides that of doing his prison work well, an outlet

which would show his friend the new viewpoint from which he now looked at life because of him. He desired especially to make this splendid man see that he really wanted to "make good," not only because of his regard for him, but also for the sake of his own awakening manhood. Yet so strange to him were these emotions that he must have felt much like a baby when its mind first becomes conscious of a desire to make itself understood. He did not know how to express himself.

Richard lay going over the bitterness—and the sweetness—of his own troubled life. The words of the little story had vividly recalled Marjory. She seemed very near him, and now instead of the fretful accusing Marjory of their last days in Hampton she was the laughing loving Marjory of their honeymoon days. During all these dark years in prison Richard had seldom allowed Marjory's image to take possession of him, nor would he allow himself to ponder upon the question of the child's birth. He felt about summoning Marjory's face before him in the degradation of the prison much as he had always felt about connecting her name with his after his theft. She was too pure and beautiful to have any part in his criminal career! Taking back his real name before the trial, Richard had managed to keep the name which *she* bore off the records; and even though he had told Judge Sawyer much of his past history upon the judge's return to Warsaw Prison as warden, he had never given him even the smallest hint about his marriage, or that he had been known by the alias of Denneth Richardson. He had disgraced the name borne by his mother. No other woman's name should suffer at his hands!

Richard did not have the slightest suspicion that Marjory's and the judge's paths had crossed; but

simply as a matter of general precaution he had continued vigilantly to guard the secret which, if becoming known, might mean a certain amount of scandal, or at least disgrace, to her. Undoubtedly things were better just as they were; but oh, how he had longed to talk about her to the judge! Since he had done so much toward redeeming the past through his earnest and honest endeavor to become an influence for good in Warsaw Prison, he had allowed the thought of Marjory to come to him more and more frequently. Through the years his loyalty and love for her had never wavered. Reflection under conditions permitting a juster sense of proportion since he had been put into the sunshine beneath the blue canopy of heaven, had enabled him to see how vastly better it would have been during the year of their life together if he had not weakly yielded to the temptation of giving her more than he could afford. Oh, if he had only been a *man* and fought the thing out, instead of allowing it to conquer him and put him where he was to-day! What an extraordinary coincidence that the little story should have been read to *him*! The author's sorrows and problems were so like what his and Marjory's had been. He longed with his whole heart to see and talk to Marjory before the end came, and yet had no doubt whatever that the forgiveness which in the little story had characterized the heroine's attitude toward the hero in no way represented Marjory's feeling toward him!

He turned and smiled bravely toward Stanley.

"Thank you for reading to me," he said, little realizing the effort which it had cost Stanley to overcome his timidity enough to read aloud, nor yet knowing how Stanley had labored in the prison night school in order to improve his reading enough to do so. "You read very nicely indeed, in spite of the fact

that you tell me your early education was abominably neglected. It's a sweet story that, though I could wish it ended more happily. By the way, who is the author?"

Stanley turned to the title page. "Marjory Matthews," he read.

"What!" Richard Dennison exclaimed, sitting bolt upright, his sightless eyes widening as he struggled frantically to push aside the black curtain forever in front of them, and *see* the boy who had just pronounced this name of all names in the world! It can't be! My God, Gray, where did you get hold of that name?" and his gaunt hands clinched and unclinched themselves, the blood pounding to his white face and settling in his hollow cheeks in a hectic flush. "Give me the book!"

Stanley placed the little volume in Richard's trembling hands. Involuntarily he held it up in front of his eyes; and then a sudden anger filling him at his inability to see it he flung it violently from him and dropped back upon his pillows.

The effort had brought on a paroxysm of coughing, terrible in its results. The poor lungs which had been struggling to heal themselves in the fresh air and sunshine, now refused to be mistreated longer. A hemorrhage ensued, and when finally it had been checked and Richard breathed normally again, he lay very still and white, his limp hand in that of the warden's, while Dr. Deever, with the assistance of another of the prison physicians, vainly endeavored to bring back to his cold body some warmth of life. But the Angel of Death hovered very near.

"What started the coughing, Gray?" the warden asked of Stanley, who stood at the foot of the bed too frightened and distressed to move. "Did he attempt to get up or exert himself in any way?"

Stanley shook his head. "No, sir," he said, "but he got awfully excited over the book."

The warden looked puzzled for a moment, and then he remembered. "The little book I gave you to read to him?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is it?"

Stanley picked the book up from the floor and handed it to the warden. Warden Sawyer seemed more puzzled than ever. He had thought that the book would interest and amuse Richard. It was sad, of course, and dealt with the problems of a criminal; but he had found that both of these elements generally made particular appeal to the inmates of Warsaw. The men under his régime, having become interested in the welfare of criminals, were extremely interested in all stories about them.

"How do you mean he 'got excited'?" the judge asked curiously.

Stanley repeated the scene as best he remembered until it came to the point where he had rushed frantically for Dr. Deever. Here breaking off he said in an agony of anxiety:

"Warden, he ain't going to die, is he? Say he ain't! He's all I've got in the world, Warden. Say he ain't going to die. Nobody was ever kind to me but you two. Oh, say he ain't going to die!"

Warden Sawyer's heart was touched by this expression of the hitherto silent youth's devotion.

"No, no, he's going to be all right," he quieted him. "Don't worry. He's had attacks like this before."

Stanley stood quietly after that while the two doctors slowly restored Richard's consciousness. A certain feeble strength returned to him. He lifted his lids.

"Who's here?" he asked, rolling his eyes about in the characteristic manner of endeavoring to see, which he had always used since sight left him. "I want the warden."

"I'm here, my friend," Warden Sawyer's voice assured him, and he pressed Richard's hand between both of his.

For a moment Richard seemed comforted; and then he asked:

"You're here too, aren't you, Dr. Deever?"

"You bet I am," that cheery little person answered heartily, and he adjusted Richard's pillow as gently as any woman could have done. "You're all right now, aren't you?"

Richard reached out his free hand and put it upon the top of the ones which held his own.

"Judge," he said, "you are the best friend I've got. I'm *not* all right. In spite of what Dr. Deever says, or can do for me," and his eyes tried to look in the doctor's direction, "I know that my hours are numbered. I have known it for several days. There is something I want you to do for me. You know that little book you gave Gray to read to me?"

"Yes," Warden Sawyer said eagerly, wondering what was coming.

"Well, *is* its author's name—Marjory Matthews?"

Judge Sawyer looked at Richard's flushed face curiously; then signalled to the doctor and Stanley to leave them. There was something strangely intense in the man's tones as he asked the question, and the veins in his forehead stood out while his mouth was held in a constrained firm line.

"Why, yes," Judge Sawyer said. "Marjory Matthews Richardson. She is an old, old friend of mine. Did you like the book?"

Hardly had he finished the words before Richard's

hands, in spite of his weakness, had gripped the warden's even more tightly than before. Marjory, his wife, an old friend of his best friend! It seemed almost too extraordinary to believe!

Richard was indeed torn between all the conflicting emotions which this news, coupled with the reading of the book, had wrought in him; yet in his voice as he spoke now there was very little emotion shown. He was holding himself well in check. This was probably his last chance to know the many things he wished to know about Marjory; but he must remember to do nothing, nothing, he kept repeating to himself, to endanger her happiness. If the book were really her own experiences, she was herself ill. Perhaps, though, that phrase about her "last hours" was only the coating of fiction which disguised her story. Anyway, the story itself showed him plainly enough that Marjory had changed her mind about him, and after all that was what mattered!

"Judge," he said plaintively, "try to find her for me. The author. I—I—knew her years ago. She evidently doesn't feel now the—way she used to about me." Then his anxiety getting the better of his caution, he exclaimed excitedly:

"Oh, Judge, don't you think if she knew I was dying she would come to me? I want to see her, Judge. I want—"

"Richard Dennison," Warden Sawyer broke in, for a sudden idea had dawned over him, "is that the only name you've ever had? Answer!"

The sick man shook his head. "That's my real name, but my alias was Denneth Richardson." Then turning his face pathetically up to the judge's, he said: "You understand, don't you, Warden? I've wanted to tell you, oh, you don't know how much! But I felt I could not do so until now."

Indeed he did understand! Stupid fool that he was, why had he not thought of this possibility before, Judge Sawyer asked himself. Yet as he turned the case over in his mind he could find even now no reason for his having guessed Richard's double identity.

Slowly he disengaged his hands from those of the clinging man. The whole wretched existence which this man and woman, through little fault of their own, had unnecessarily lived, seemed so tragic to him that for a moment his splendid spirit of optimism and hope wavered. But being a true optimist and a philosophical one as well, he immediately saw a vision of happiness in the future for them both.

"I'll get her within a very few hours," he said; then speaking very positively and with all the authority of which he was personally as well as professionally capable, he continued: "Now you will *have* to accept the pardon the governor offered you a year ago. Perhaps your duty did lie in 'helping the boys' then," referring to the greatest sacrifice in Richard's life which he had made soon after the new Warsaw was established, "but *now* your duty lies outside these walls and in making Marjory happy," and he was gone from the room.

* * * * *

Many hours had dragged by for Richard, made acutely nervous with anticipation; but now Dr. Deever, anxiously standing by his bedside, heard from the little glassed-in room at the end of the roof colony the chug-chug of the warden's motor as it returned from its trip to Hampton. The excitement of the day had been too much for the poor blind fellow, and the end seemed very near. Another hemorrhage had lowered his fast sinking vitality. He was conscious only intermittently, yet when he was so, Marjory's name was the one thing

he constantly whispered as he lay listening intently at every approaching sound, asking repeatedly, if anyone did but come near him, if it were she.

Huddled in an ever watchful attitude, but with an air of hopelessness and dejection which was heart-rending in its pathos, Stanley Gray kept watch at the foot of the sick bed. If Richard's respiration varied even the slightest degree, the youth was by his side with the soft spring of a faithful dog, keenly watching him, while praying fervently to himself that the man's life be spared. Even the physicians and nurses, used as they were to the sight of grief, were touched and troubled at the wildness of apprehension shining from Stanley's eyes. They feared lest he become demented with grief.

The door opened and Warden Sawyer entered. Exchanging a few words with Dr. Deever, he bent over Richard.

"Do you think he will pull through?" he asked anxiously. "I see he is much worse than when I left."

Dr. Deever answered in a few words, spoken so low that no one save the judge could hear him. Then in a louder tone, he said: "The change may come any moment now. I think you had better bring her in."

"But the excitement?" Warden Sawyer asked. "Won't it be too much in his present condition?"

Dr. Deever shook his head. "The excitement of anticipation and of worry lest she fail to come has been the bad thing for him. This is different!"

Warden Sawyer slipped into the hall.

An exquisitely dainty little woman, hardly larger than a child and with a child's appealing look about her pretty lineless face, came through the door. As she saw the splendid head with its tumbled mass of white hair above a broad high forehead, a sob escaped her lips.

The head was moving restlessly back and forth upon its pillow, and she heard her name in a constant whispered murmur.

Quickly gaining control of herself, Marjory walked over to the bed and gazed down upon the wasted man before her.

At the faint sound of her weeping Richard's lids raised themselves, and Marjory looked into big dark eyes, unscarred and wonderfully beautiful because of their permanently enlarged pupils. In them there was no expression of recognition, and she knew he could not see her.

"Marjory," he dreamily murmured, "little anemone—"

Then both of his hands fumbled out in an impatient and impulsive gesture of appeal. He asked querulously, "Has she come, Dr. Deever; has she come?"

Marjory dropped to her knees and slipped one arm beneath Richard's pillow, while she put the other hand gently upon his cheek in a stroking sort of manner which had characterized her most affectionate caresses in their youth.

"Yes, Denny, I'm here. Your Marjory's here," and adopting another of her old time caresses, though she felt as if she could hardly stand the strain, she put her lips to his ear.

"I love you, Denny. I love you," she whispered.

At these once familiar words, and the manner in which they were said, a spasm of pain crossed his face. He thought he was dreaming again, as he had dreamed so many times of late. Jerking his head away, a look of terror widened his sightless eyes; and then seeming to remember something, he quieted down. Feebly raising one of his hands he groped out for her.

She remembered how he used to stroke her hair. That was *his* characteristic caress. Taking the hatpins

from her hat she threw them upon the floor and leaned her uncovered head forward. Richard's thin white fingers felt the mass of burnished gold, now sprinkled with silver; and smiling happily, he drew her face down onto the pillow beside his own.

"Little anemone—flower I love," he murmured brokenly, the old familiar words coming between a spasmodic struggle to breathe, "sunshine—flowers—love, little—anemone——"

His hands dropped limply to his breast, his face relaxed, and the voice ceased to struggle.

Like a tiger the watcher at the foot of the bed leaped forward! "He must not die! He must not!" he cried in hysterically convulsive tones.

Dr. Deever caught his arm and held him fast. "Sh-sh," he said, himself unnerved at the sight of Richard's transfigured face, and thinking only of Marjory's coming grief.

Stanley jerked away, and pushing up to the bedside opposite Marjory began calling Richard's name with a plaintive persistency which brought scalding tears to the eyes of every occupant of the room.

Marjory looked up. In his pleading, Stanley had bent forward. A button of his soft shirt gave way, and there now swung out into full view a gold locket of queer design. On one side of it there were three initials in silver; on the other, raised signs of the zodiac.

Marjory's hand clutched her throat. Her body swayed forward. In spite of her anxiety for Richard, she half reached out toward the younger man. The shock was overwhelming; yet she did not faint. The consciousness that the little hunchback, in spite of all she had done for him, had never seemed to her like her own child, made her long to make herself known to this boy at once. There was absolutely no

doubt in her mind this time.¹ She did not stop to think—she *knew!*

"Stanley!" she gasped breathlessly.

But before the astonished boy could respond a soft sigh from Richard's lips reached her, and looking into his face again she realized that the soul and body which had been imprisoned for so long were now free forever. Richard was far away from trouble and sorrow, and the sorrow which was to be *her* lot must be shared alone, save for—their son.

For a moment she buried her face in her hands, now lying palms up upon the bed. Life had been so hard and sad. Why should she have to live on! Then there came over her the blessed consciousness that Stanley, her own long lost son, stood before her, and needed his mother's love. Raising her eyes to Stanley's she felt a great throbbing hope for the future flood through her heart. She had *everything* to live for! She would make her boy happy!

BOOKS RECEIVED
FOR THE LIBRARY
OF THE AMERICAN
ACADEMY IN ROME



BOOK OF
LOAN LIBRARY
TODAY

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 129 907 2

Un